

Kuwaitis to receive compensation

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — More than 4,500 people in Kuwait with compensation claims stemming from the Iraqi invasion will receive their first payments on Tuesday, the authority dealing with the claims said Monday. Some 4,543 people, mainly Kuwaitis, will receive about \$2,500 each with a total of \$11.3 million disbursed, officials at the public authority for assessment of compensation said. This installment is the first being made to those in category A claiming losses of up to \$8,000 for forced departure during the 1990 invasion and category C claimants seeking compensation of up to \$100,000 for death and injury. Illegal detention and other losses. The public authority has already made payments to around 3,000 people in category B claiming up to \$2,500 for injury or loss as a result of the 1990-1991 Iraqi invasion and occupation.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية «الراي»

Sudan: Foreign forces in northeast

KHARTOUM (R) — Sudan said on Monday it was fighting Eritrean and Ethiopian troops that have taken control of border areas in the northeastern Red Sea state. "Our forces are now advancing on all fronts and are working to clear the border areas this week," the government-owned Sudan Al Hadith newspaper quoted the commissioner of Tokar province, Abdul Rahman Balal, as saying. "The armed forces and the Popular Defence Force are now clearing the pockets of mercenaries, agents and the minority Ethiopian (troops) amongst the mountains," the daily added. Sudanese rebels said last week they were mounting a major offensive in the northeast of Africa's largest country and were advancing on Tokar town in the northeast en route to heading towards Port Sudan, a key link with the outside world.

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Arabs unite over freezing ties with Israel and call to reinstitute boycott

Foreign ministers adopt unanimous tough resolution in Cairo

CAIRO (Agencies) — Arab foreign ministers meeting in Cairo said on Monday they unanimously decided to suspend normal ties with Israel because of what Syrian minister Farouq Al Sharara called the Jewish state's "clumsy and stupid" anti-peace policy.

The ministers agreed on Sunday night to recommend that their countries suspend normal ties with the Jewish state, restore the economic boycott, close down Israeli missions and withdraw from multilateral peace talks. They met again on Monday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accused Arab states of gangling up on Israel but called the notion that they could revive the Arab boycott "absurd."

Mr. Sharara told reporters at the end of the ministers' morning session: "This resolution has been issued unanimously. All the ministers who spoke, including Morocco and Oman, said they support the essence of the resolution."

"The resolution is very wise because it is aimed at saving the peace process and affirms the commitment of Arabs to peace. It says that peace cannot be achieved unless occupied Arab land is returned. Peace for peace cannot be implemented."

No-confidence motions defeated in Knesset

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Israeli parliament rejected two no-confidence motions Monday submitted by the opposition against the government. The Labour and far-left Meretz parties submitted the motions saying that the government was responsible for the deterioration in security in Israel and for the Jewish state's isolation in the international community. The two motions were beaten by a vote of 55-46, with two abstentions by deputies from the far-right Moleket Party.

Israeli ambassador's car attacked in Jordan

AMMAN (AFP) — Jordanian police are investigating an attack on the Israeli ambassador's car in front of his home in an Amman suburb, an Israeli embassy spokesman said on Monday. The unknown attackers broke the car's windows and punctured its tyres while it was parked at night last week in Sweifeh, spokesman Shalom Turjoman told AFP. The Jordanian police have ruled out the possibility that the attackers were trying to steal the car, he said. This was the first incident of this type since Israel opened an embassy in Jordan after the two countries signed a peace treaty in October 1994.

Iran invites Qadhafi to Islamic summit

TUNIS (R) — Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati on Monday left Libya after handing leader Muammar Qadhafi an invitation to an Islamic summit next December in Tehran, the official Libyan news agency JANA said. In his message Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani... "expressed his strong desire that the brother leader of the revolution (Qadhafi) attends personally the conference" ... of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), JANA monitored in Tunis, added. Mr. Velayati arrived in Tripoli on Sunday.

"Netanyahu's policies have forced Arab countries to take such a decision," Mr. Sharara said. "Arabs have taken a wise decision in response to a clumsy and stupid policy."

The Arab League had not yet released the final text of the resolutions but, as described by some of the ministers, they are the most decisive concerted action the Arabs have taken since Mr. Netanyahu took power last June.

The effect will be somewhat diluted because states which have formal agreements with Israel — Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinians — are not required to enforce the resolutions.

Arab anger came to a head when Israeli bulldozers broke ground at a Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem on March 18.

Palestinians throwing stones have clashed with Israeli troops in the West Bank and Gaza since then and talks between Israel and the Palestinians are close to collapse.

Mr. Netanyahu said on Monday Arabs should not revert to threats whenever their relations with Israel were strained.

"What is required on the Arab side is to recognise that we are not always going to have agreement

(Continued on page 7)

Russia said to propose alternative to missile sale to Iran

TEL AVIV (AFP) — President Boris Yeltsin suggested to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that Israel financially compensate Russia if it agreed not to sell weapons to Iran, the Ha'aretz newspaper reported Monday.

At a meeting between the two in Moscow at the beginning of the month, Mr. Yeltsin admitted for the first time that Russia was considering a deal to supply Iran with the technological know-how for SS-4 surface-to-surface missiles, high-ranking Israeli sources told the Independent daily.

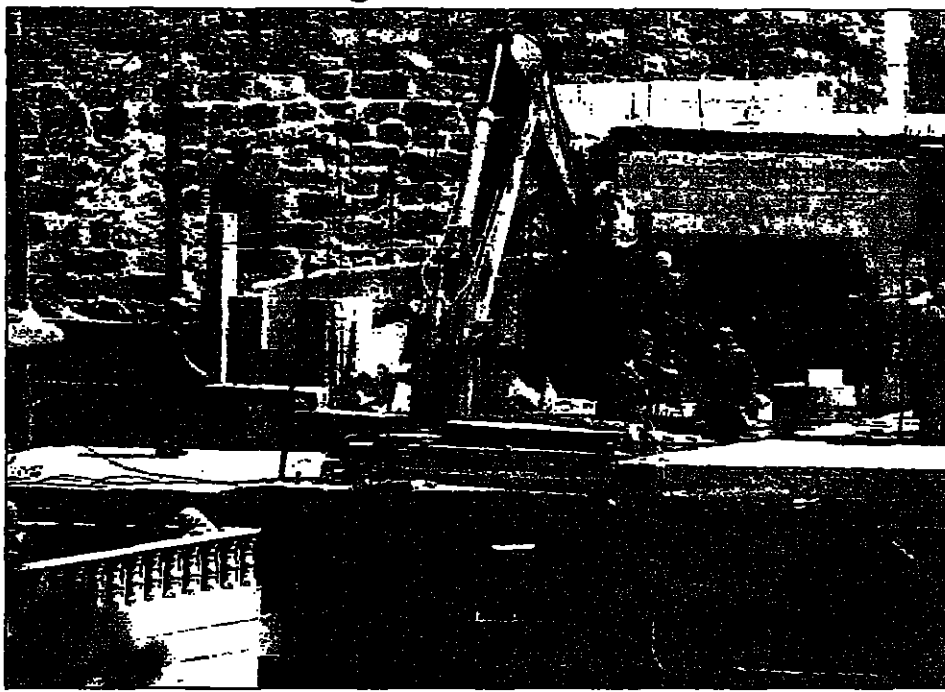
Instead of selling the medium-range weapons to Iran, a vowed enemy of Israel, the Russian president suggested Israel offer "comparable compensation," the paper wrote.

The sale whose financial worth is unknown would be a violation of an international agreement to which Russia is a signatory that restricts the dissemination of such information on missiles.

With the Russian technological information, Iran could build most of the parts of the weapon, Israeli weapons expert Gerald Steinberg told Ha'aretz.

The SS-4 missile has a range of 1,600 kilometres, more than double the distance of the Scud-C missiles the Iranians currently possess.

(Continued on page 7)



Israeli bulldozers on Monday destroy the second floor of a house where Palestinian Musa Abu Diya resided, who Israel says staged the March 21 suicide attack in Tel Aviv (see story on page 12) (Reuters photo)

PNA shuns U.S. call for security ties with Israel

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has rejected a U.S. initiative to restore security coordination with Israel, a senior Palestinian security official said on Monday.

In continuing Palestinian protests in the West Bank, two Palestinian children were wounded by Israeli troops as they broke up a protest by Palestinians near the Jenin, military sources said.

Palestinians have staged daily protests in West Bank towns since the Israeli government defied international condemnation and began building a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem on March 18.

Nearly 200 Palestinians stoned Israeli soldiers on Monday on a road leading from Jenin, in the north of the West Bank, to the Israeli town of Haifa, Israeli military sources said.

The troops responded with tear-gas and rubber bullets after coming under a hail of stones and Molotov cocktails, they said. Two children were shot and wounded. Their ages were not immediately known.

(Continued on page 7)

Colonel Jibril Rajoub, head of Palestinian preventive security in the West Bank, told a news conference that security coordination ended when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sent bulldozers on March 18 to break ground for the new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

"The Israeli side and the Americans, through their envoy to the area, Dennis Ross, tried to restore security coordination between the Palestinian (National) Authority and the Israeli side," a press release by the Palestinian Information Ministry, summarising Col. Rajoub's presentation to the press, said.

"But we rejected that and insisted on the linkage between the security coordination and other issues," it quoted him as saying.

Daily clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli troops have erupted in the West Bank since the settlement groundbreaking. One Palestinian was killed in a clash on Saturday.

A Palestinian suicide bomber killed three women in Tel Aviv on March 21.

Mr. Ross met Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and

Netanyahu late last week trying to resolve the crisis.

Col. Rajoub said that security coordination was the product of the 1993 Israeli-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) peace accord that launched Palestinian self-rule in parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. He said that as long as Israel did not live up to the terms of the accord, there would be no security coordination.

"If we advance with political coordination, we will be able to advance with the security coordination," Col. Rajoub told Israel Radio.

"Right now there are no direct connections" between Israeli and Palestinian intelligence agencies, he added.

Col. Rajoub spoke a day after Palestinian police helped avert major clashes by keeping Palestinian demonstrators in self-rule areas away from Israeli troops on Land Day, when Palestinians took to the streets to protest against Israeli land expropriations.

Colonel Moshe Elad, the Israeli in charge of liaison with the Palestinian police, said during a news confer-

King holds talks with Annan, is due to meet Clinton today

NEW YORK (Agencies) — His Majesty King Hussein on Monday held talks with U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the Middle East peace process and other issues related to Jordan-U.N. relations and the work of the world body.

The King was accompanied to the meeting by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh and other officials.

The King, who is accompanied by Her Majesty Queen Noor and Their Royal Highnesses Prince Hamzeh and Hashem and Princess Raya, is scheduled to meet with U.S. President Bill Clinton at the White House on Tuesday.

The White House talks will cover the problems facing the Middle East peace process in addition to Jordanian-U.S. relations.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Saturday described the King's meet-

ing with President Clinton as of high strategic importance.

In his talks with President Clinton, the King is expected to reiterate his firm support for peace with Israel despite a recent war of words with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu but would warn that Israeli policies which have angered Palestinians, including Jewish settlement building in Arab East Jerusalem and the limited withdrawal from the West Bank, were also undermining Jordan's own peace treaty with Israel.

Another key issue for discussions is Iraq, Jordanian officials said.

The King will also meet

with senior Clinton administration officials on Jordanian-U.S. economic and trade relations and also address Arab ambassadors to the U.S. and journalists.

On Wednesday, King Hussein is scheduled to hold separate meetings with

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Defence Secretary William Cohen.

While in New York, the King and Queen were scheduled to the "Seeds of Peace" Award at a special ceremony in recognition of their efforts towards peace in the Middle East. The King was also scheduled to deliver an address on the Middle East situation and the future of the peace process at a meeting to be organised by the "Seeds of Peace" institution in New York. Also on Monday, Faysal Tarawneh, Jordan's ambassador to the U.S., took the oath of office as foreign minister in front of the King in New York.

Dr. Tarawneh was in the U.S. when Prime Minister Majali formed his new government two weeks ago and named him as foreign minister and it was decided then that the King would swear in the foreign minister in New York.

Arab League puts off setting up bodies, urges Turkey to open dialogue on water

CAIRO (AFP) — The Arab League Foreign Ministers' Council decided Monday to delay until its next session in September decisions on creating an Arab court of justice and other joint cooperation bodies.

The projects — the court, a body for settling conflicts, an Arab security pact and the United Arab states union — were sent to technical and legal committees for consideration, a league official said.

Syria proposed the delay while Egypt said it wanted to pass the court project and Iraq and Oman had reservations about it, Arab diplomats said. After the meeting behind closed doors, the ministers decided to delay all the projects, saying each was tied to the other.

The Arab League meanwhile called for Turkey talks with Syria and Iraq as soon as possible to arrive at a just redivision of the waters of the Tigris and the Euphrates.

The Council of Foreign Ministers, which has been meeting since Sunday in Cairo,

"called for the Turkish government to commit itself, as early as possible, to tripartite negotiations to come to a final agreement on a just and reasonable redivision."

The Council expressed its "concern over the pursuit of dam construction projects on the two rivers, carried out by Turkey without consulting the two other countries."

The council also asked Ankara "to stop sending polluted water to its two neighbours" and "tasked the league's secretary general, Esmat Abdul Meguid, with taking steps toward the Turkish side to lay the groundwork for a just end to this problem in accordance with international law."

The council, which has been dealing with the issue since March 1996, decided to reconsider it at its next meeting in September.

The Tigris and Euphrates rivers originate

(Continued on page 7)

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Chief Executive

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ARAB BANK

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Beitoun	Nabulus	
Jenin	Tulkarem	Qalqiliyah
Jericho	Gaza	
	Gaza / Rimat	

ARAB BANK

Khan Younis, P.O.Box 91, Al Qassam Street, Tel: 07 854775, Fax: 07 854745

Kuwait arrests group 'posing security threat'

KUWAIT (AP) — Kuwait has arrested a group of people, believed to be members of Bahrain's opposition, for threatening the country's security.

A statement from the Interior Ministry, carried by the Kuwait News Agency late Sunday, said the group was arrested at an apartment in Kuwait on Wednesday.

The agency did not give any names or nationalities. It quoted the ministry as saying the group "intended ... to carry out illegal activities that would threaten the country's security."

The Bahrain Freedom Movement, a London-based opposition group, said nine Bahraini citizens who lived in Kuwait were arrested on Wednesday. It said two others had been taken into custody earlier.

"No one knows why these Bahrainis were arrested," the movement said in a statement.

Kuwait's Al Watan daily said Monday the Bahrainis were being investigated for

distributing inflammatory leaflets and collecting donations without a permit.

"Banned political leaflets that insult the ruling regime in Bahrain and incite against Bahrain's legitimate government were found with the Bahraini group," the newspaper said. It did not give the source of its information.

The daily said the group probably would be handed over to the Bahraini government.

Bahrain, a Gulf financial centre and home to an important U.S. Navy base, has been shaken by unrest since December 1994. The opposition says it wants political reform, but the government accuses it of conspiring with Iran to set up a Shiite Islamic state in Bahrain.

The Al Watan report said this was not the first time a group of Bahrainis had been arrested in Kuwait, adding that previously some 19 Bahrainis were rounded up for similar reasons.

FIS says it will not run in Algerian elections; Islamic party disbands

ALGIERS (AFP) — The outlawed Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), which was poised to win power in 1992 before the military cancelled elections, will not field any candidates in Algeria's general election due on June 5, one of the group's leaders said Monday.

"FIS representatives have absolutely no intention to stand in these elections — and with no other parties whether they share our ideology or not," the FIS leader told the daily Al Aftan Al Siyassi, which did not reveal his identity.

This statement refutes persistent reports in the Algerian press recently which suggested that FIS candidates might stand on the electoral lists of other parties, particularly those which, like the FIS, signed an "appeal for peace."

The leader of the Al Nahda movement recently said his party was prepared to include FIS candidates on its lists.

"This declaration is nothing more than a political manoeuvre destined to win greater popularity and credibility for Al Nahda by attracting the FIS's large following with something non-existent," the anonymous FIS leader was cited as saying.

In a separate move, the Al Umma Islamic party announced Monday it was to disband as a refusal to conform to new legislation banning political parties based on religion.

In a statement, the party said conforming with the new law — adopted by parliament last month — would amount to abandoning the ideas and convictions for which it had fought for years.

"All legal activity has become impossible," the statement declared.

Algeria's other Islam-based political parties have adopted different strategies in response to the law. The Movement of Islamic Society has refused to change its name, citing an article in the country's constitution which says Islam is the state religion in Algeria. For its part, the Movement for Islamic Renaissance decided to change its name, becoming Al Nahda.

Militant groups have meanwhile stepped up attacks on civilians as well as security forces in the run-up to the June 5 elections. Dozens were killed in car bombings and nearly 50 others were massacred in attacks blamed on militant groups.



PROTEST AGAINST CONTROVERSIAL LAW: Reform Jews hold up broken hearts as they demonstrate outside the Knesset on Monday against pending legislation by the ultra-religious parties that would tighten the grip of the orthodox rabbis on religious affairs in the Jewish state. The Knesset is to decide that a convert to Judaism in Israel would be recognised as a Jew only if the conversion was performed by an Orthodox rabbi, alienating the reform and Conservative streams of Judaism who far outnumber religious Jews worldwide (Reuters photo)

German hostages in Yemen in good health — official

DUBAI (AFP) — Two elderly German couples abducted by tribesmen in Yemen last week are in good health and being treated like guests, a police official said Monday.

"Notables from the tribe are trying to convince the kidnappers to release the hostages and are filling them with religion and the law are opposed to such acts," the Yemeni police official, who asked not to be identified, said.

The four Germans "are in good health and have been treated like guests" by the kidnappers, said the official, who was contacted by AFP from the United Arab Emirates.

But "the kidnappers know that it's out of the question for the authorities to give in to their demands," the official from the ma'arif area, 200 kilometres from Sanaa and the site of the kidnapping, said.

He did not disclose the kidnappers' demands. Tribal sources said the kidnapping was carried out by members of the Zaidi clan of the Jihm tribe, and that clan leader Sheikh Mohammad Al Zaidi had been leading a medi-

ation effort with the kidnappers since Friday.

The police official said that the two couples, whose identities were not revealed, are being held in a house in the village of Mahajja.

Security services have surrounded Mahajja and several members of the Jihm tribe have been arrested to put pressure on the captors, the Interior Ministry said Sunday.

The two couples were kidnapped while they were returning to Sanaa after visiting archaeological ruins in Ma'arif.

Their abduction was the second kidnapping of German tourists in Yemen in less than a month.

Earlier this month seven German motorcycle tourists were kidnapped by 50 armed tribesmen near Tarim, 750 kilometres east of Sanaa, and held by members of the Manshal mountain tribe, north of the oil-rich Wadi Masila area, for 10 days.

Travel agents said they have now agreed with the government to restrict journeys by tourists outside Sanaa.

Iraqis also say it with flowers — fake that is

BAGHDAD (AFP) — If Iraqis wanted to send someone greetings, bury a loved one, celebrate Easter Sunday or remember an anniversary, the chances are they offered artificial flowers.

If they brought any kind of flowers at all, that is.

Fresh flowers grown in an area once-known as the Fertile Crescent or brought in from Jordan are a luxury for most people who have been scraping by under almost seven years of trade sanctions, florists say.

"Iraqi Christians now prefer buying something practical like a dessert rather than flowers for Easter," saleswoman Sour Mikael, 23, said from "the Baghdad" shop adorned with more than 100 bouquets of mainly cloth flowers.

The only fresh flowers in her store on the east bank of the Tigris River lay in two buckets at the bottom of an opaque kitchen refrigerator standing in the display room.

One of these withered Iraqi-grown Gladioli sells for 1,000 dinars (around \$1 at the current rate), and one is all most customers will

buy. In contrast, a small bouquet of a dozen cloth flowers sells for 3,000 dinars, and it can be used repeatedly. Government employees earn around 5,000 dinars (\$5) per month and have to work second or third jobs.

Before sanctions, a bouquet of fresh flowers cost around 10 dinars.

Ninety per cent of the flowers sold now are cloth or dried flowers, compared to 10 per cent seven years ago, said the Baghdad's owner Raed Abdul Baqui who used to import from Holland.

It is not worth it for florists to stock fresh flowers when turnover is so slow that they will wilt, florists said. Nor do nurseries want to invest in something with such meager returns.

Sawsan Al Wazzan, who fears her business will collapse, said customers are surprised to find her shop also stocks a small variety of fresh flowers. "They start laughing. They can't imagine it. I'm so sad for them."

When the mother of one Iraqi journalist died last year, he and his relatives put

cloth flowers on her coffin.

"When we buried my mother, we all took artificial wreaths and gave them to the church so that somebody else can use them," said the journalist who did not want to be named.

"What's the point of leaving it on my mother's grave?" he asked.

Graves at the Armenian Orthodox Church bore artificial flowers if they had any at all.

"The artificial ones will last a long time on the tomb," said Barouy Orchanian, the church manager. "The natural ones are rare and expensive."

Mr. Orchanian finds the ratio of artificial flowers is much higher now, although those worshippers who have gardens managed to bring fresh flowers to the altar for Good Friday services.

Mohammad Mohsen, who runs a shop outside the Iraqi Red Crescent medical clinic in the relatively wealthy Mansour neighbourhood, said he missed the time when his store overflowed with fresh flowers.

"Sometimes people come for real flowers. I don't have

any," said Mr. Mohsen, who like most of the others interviewed spoke to AFP in the presence of an information ministry "minder."

"It's as if the store is sick," he said.

"Even public establishments don't buy real flowers any more for national holidays," Mr. Mohsen said.

Those visiting patients in the clinic are more likely to give money instead, anyway.

"If I get sick I'd prefer money instead of flowers so I can pay the doctor or buy medicine," Mr. Mohsen said. "What would I do with a bouquet of fresh flowers?"

Iraqis place considerable importance on flowers.

Women are named after them — Yasmine (jasmin) and Warda (rose) to name a few — and President Saddam Hussein chairs cabinet meetings with bouquets of flowers, apparently natural ones, on the table.

His eldest son Uday appeared on television with flowers next to his hospital bed as he recovered from an assassination attempt in December.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Briton gets 15 years jail for killing Cypriot wife

NICOSIA (R) — A Briton living in Cyprus was jailed for 15 years by a criminal court on Monday for strangling his Cypriot wife and then hurling her body out of an apartment window last year. Defendant David Parris, 34, had pleaded not guilty to charges of manslaughter in the death of his wife Avgoustina, who was 34 when she died in February 1996. But the three-bench assizes (criminal) court sitting in Nicosia ruled that Parris beat, then strangled his wife before tossing her body out of a window of their second-floor apartment in a Nicosia suburb in a fit of rage. Parris, a factory worker who has been living in Cyprus for nearly five years, claimed his wife jumped out of the window after a heated argument over money. The couple had two children, while the victim had another two from a previous marriage.

Egypt executed spy for Israel in 1995 — magazine

CAIRO (R) — Egypt secretly executed an Egyptian man for spying for the Israeli secret service Mossad two years ago after tricking him into travelling from Austria to Tunis, the weekly magazine Al Ahran Al Arabi said. The man, Mohammad Abdul Salam Al Shahed, left Egypt in 1989 and spent most of the next few years in Europe posing as a dealer in arms and uranium, said the government magazine, quoting state security prosecutor Ali Al Hewari. When he went to the Israeli embassy in Vienna to offer uranium, the Israelis recruited him for Mossad work and showed special interest in information about modifications the Egyptian armed forces had made to their weapon systems, it said. Shahed also undertook to provide information on Palestinian leaders living abroad, it added. Egypt's counter-espionage agency tracked Shahed's activities and a retired Egyptian officer whom Shahed tried to recruit told Egyptian intelligence of his requests for information. The report did not say how Shahed was persuaded to travel to Tunisia, where the Tunisian authorities arrested him and handed him over to the Egyptians.

Sudanese to testify in hijack case in London

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Fifteen Sudanese witnesses are expected to testify before a British court in the coming two weeks in the trial of seven Iraqis who allegedly hijacked a Sudan Airways scheduled Khartoum-Amman flight last year, forcing the plane to land at London's Stansted airport. The independent Akhbar Al Yom daily newspaper Monday quoted Mustafa Nuwari, director general of the Sudanese Civil Aviation Department, as saying that there is coordination between Sudanese and British judicial authorities on the case. The official added that security measures at Khartoum Airport were to be stepped up. The hijackers, who surrendered and released all passengers and crew unharmed after a nine-hour stand-off, asked for political asylum for themselves and family members who were also on the plane.

Crowd jeers Turkey's minister of Culture

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey's pro-Islamic Minister of Culture Ismail Kahraman was booed Sunday night when he arrived to watch the opening concert of an international music festival. Members of the 10,000-strong crowd also called out slogans supporting Turkey's secularism, before President Suleyman Demirel, who also was at the televised event. Mr. Kahraman is part of Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's ruling pro-Islamic Welfare Party, which formed the first Islamic administration to run Turkey since the country became a secular republic in 1923. Welfare Party members have been openly hostile to cultural events like symphonies, the opera and ballet, deeming them to be products of the West. Mr. Demirel, however, told the audience that the concert was a "magnificent image" of modern Turkey. "I thank you in the name of the state for having contributed to the Turkey of Ataturk," he said, referring to the founder of the secular republic.

Sudanese youths flee to Uganda

KAMPALA (AFP) — More than 400 Sudanese teenagers and young adults have entered Uganda this month to avoid conscription into the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) or the Sudanese army, the state-owned New Vision newspaper reported Monday. The refugees, aged up to 25, have settled in northwestern Kotido district. Relief workers in the area said they urgently need humanitarian help. There are an estimated 250,000 other Sudanese refugees in northern Uganda. Sudan's President Omar Al Bashir last week called for a general mobilisation to counter "acts of aggression" on the eastern and southern borders. The president, in a statement broadcast on state-owned radio and television, called for "full mobilisation to repulse the Ugandan, Ethiopian and Eritrean acts of aggression on Sudan." The three countries have on several occasions denied implication in the conflict.

JORDAN TELEVISION

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PROGRAMME TWO

14:05 Cartoon — Budgie-The Little Helicopter
14:30 Grimy
15:00 French Programmes
15:00 Super Sports Folies
16:30 Dog House
17:00 Preserving for the Taste of It
17:15 The Album Show
18:00 French Programmes
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — The Office
20:00 Superstars of Action
20:30 Encounter
21:10 The Nature of Things
22:00 News in English
22:25 Snowy River
23:00 Mission Impossible

PRAYER TIMES

04:04 Fajr
05:22 (Sunrise) Duha
11:40 Dhuhur
15:12 Asr
17:58 Maghreb
19:16 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweidieh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church
Tel. 632783
St. Joseph Church Tel. 634590
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757

Terra Sancta Church

Tel. 622366

Anglican Church

Tel. 652826

Armenian Catholic Church

Tel. 771331

Armenian Orthodox Church

Tel. 775261

St. Ephraim Church

Tel. 771751

Amman International Church

Tel. 652526

Evangelical Lutheran Church

Tel. 824328

German-speaking Evangelical

Congregation Tel. 845457

The Latter-Day Saints Tel.

654932

Church of Nazarene Tel.

675691

The Evangelical Local Church

in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking

Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Warm weather conditions will prevail with temperatures higher than average by 4-5 degrees and winds southeasterly moderate.

In Aqaba, winds will be southerly moderate and seas choppy.

Amman09/25

Aqaba15/30

Deserts

07/27

Jordan Valley

13/28

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 25, Aqaba 28

Humidity readings: Amman 22 per cent, Aqaba 25 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Mukhlis Halaseh5519220

Dr. Rudi Salskar856457

Dr. Fadi Al Khatib865456

Dr. Yusef Al Faqih790104

Ferdows pharmacy778336

Al Asena pharmacy637055

Al Salam pharmacy636730

Abdall pharmacy644945

Shmeisani pharmacy637660

Nairokh pharmacy623672

Najib pharmacy847632

IRBID:

Dr. Mazen Abu Bakir 276852

Al Quds pharmacy(—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Issa Al Omari901266

Khalifeh pharmacy985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre637111

Civil Defence Dept.661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue630341

Civil Defence Emergency199

Rescue Police

192, 621111, 637777

Fire Brigade

617101

Blood Bank

775121

Highway Police

843402

Traffic Police

896390

Public Security Department

630321

Hotel Complaints

605800

Price Complaints

651176

Water and Sewerage Complaints

897467

Amman Municipality Complaints

787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance)

121

Overseas Calls

010230

Central Amman Telephone Repairs

623101

Abdall Telephone Repairs

661101

Jordan Television

773111

Radio Jordan

774111

Water Authority

680100

Jordan Electricity Authority

815615

Electric Power Company

636381

RJ Flight Information

0853200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32

Khalidi Maternity

644281/6

Akileh Maternity

642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity

642362

Malhas, J. Amman

636140

Palestine, Shmeisani

607071

Shmeisani Hospital

669131

University Hospital

845845

Al-Muasher Hospital

667227/9

The Islamic, Abdall

666126/37

Al-Ahli, Abdall

Court of Cassation ratifies previous rulings in two cases of sabotage

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation last week ratified two rulings issued last year by the State Security Court in two separate sabotage cases, judicial sources said.

In the first case, ten people, part of a group of 13 known by their affiliated name "Bayat Al Imam" (pledge of allegiance to the leader), were declared guilty by the State Security Court in November for attempted sabotage and lese majeste.

The ten men received sentences ranging from two years incarceration to life with hard labour.

The remaining three, whom the prosecution charged belonged to the same group, were acquitted of all charges.

At the time, the court maintained that it relied on the defendants' confessions to the prosecutors which, it said, buttressed evidence presented by the prosecution in court.

However, all 13 defendants retracted their confessions in court, claiming they were detained by security forces for more than six

months during which time they were subjected to psychological and physical torture.

Court-appointed lawyers said they did not appeal the sentences in November as they were satisfied by the ruling which they described as "fair and merciful."

However, any court sentence of over five years imprisonment is automatically reviewed by a higher court.

The group was arrested before carrying out any attack, believe themselves to be the "true followers" of the Islamic faith and do not attend mosque prayers.

The group was expelled several times from court for disrupting procedures during the 14-month trial and they continuously rejected successive appointments of lawyers to defend them, charging that they did not believe in the justice system.

It was up to God to decide their fate, they said.

One of the convicted men, Mohammad Taher Mohammad, also known as Abu Mohammad Al Maqdesi, sentenced to 15 years incarceration and whom the prosecution charges was the

group leader, said in an interview with a magazine last year that he knew the four men who were involved in a November 1995 bombing in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, which killed five Americans and two Indian nationals.

The four men had told interrogators, previous to their beheading in March, that they were influenced by the philosophies of various Islamic militant leaders, including Al Maqdesi.

In the second case, the Court of Cassation also upheld the State Security Court's conviction of two people planning to execute acts of sabotage.

Salem Jaradat, 22, was sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labour, while Ahmad Qassem Saoub received a 10-year prison term.

Court transcripts said that the two men met in 1994 and resolved to target Israeli tourists in the Wadi Mujib area.

On Feb. 24, 1995, Mr. Jaradat, totting a bag filled with explosives, and Mr. Saoub, in possession of an unlicensed gun, went to the Wadi Mujib area and originally intended to hijack a

tourist bus but were deterred due to the presence of security officers in the area, transcripts said.

The two left the area and went to a resthouse where they encountered former French Embassy Second Secretary Gilles Heine and his wife Florence and attempted to force the couple into their car, the court said.

A police patrol noted the ensuing struggle and in their attempt to succour the couple, Mr. Heine was shot. The two were tried separately at the Amman Criminal Court on charges of attempted murder.

However, the Criminal Court acquitted the two men of that charge stating that the bullet which struck the French diplomat did not come from the defendants' gun.

The two men retracted their previous confessions in front of the prosecutor, charging that they were scapegoated by security forces, and that they were carrying an unlicensed seven-millimetre gun to hunt colourful birds in the Wadi Mujib area.

ESCWA analyses water crisis, proposes regional solutions

By Tanya Habjouqa
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) analysed the current water crisis in the region and proposed solutions in two days of meetings which concluded yesterday.

In the first meeting of ESCWA's Committee on Water Resources, Minister of Water Munther Haddadin emphasised the need to share and preserve water through regional agreements.

"Water should be used to extinguish fires and not fuel the flames of discord," Dr. Haddadin said. "It is imperative for maintaining life."

Participating in the first meeting and subsequent conference of water experts were government representatives from ESCWA member states and specialists from Arab, regional, and international organisations.

"It is well-known that fresh water resources on our planet are limited, creating an imbalance between resources and population in many countries," Executive Secretary of ESCWA Hazem Beblawi said.

He said that as the Middle East is primarily composed of arid lands with insufficient water resources, it cannot meet the demand of most of its countries.

The water shortage has led to a chronic deficit in the balance of external trade in food items, difficulties in providing water for cities and other settlements, and environmental problems, Dr. Beblawi asserted.

He further stated that agricultural expansion in ESCWA countries is currently determined by available water and water utilisation priorities.

It was determined that countries of the Arab peninsula and Gulf need to desalinate sea water to sup-

ply their water demand. "We should look at water and energy as a dual force of which we can extract clean, potable water from the salty sea," Dr. Haddadin said.

A main focus of the meetings was a proposal to create a united geographical map for an underground aquifer shared between the south of Syria and northeast of Jordan.

The proposal called for the draft of approximately 15 maps to indicate the depth, flow, direction, and quality of the aquifer to ultimately preserve the quality and quantity of the resource.

A report was devised for this project, following a study initiated by the Energy, Natural Resources and Environment Division of ESCWA, the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources of Germany, and joint Jordanian/Syrian agencies.

ESCWA said.

In the water expert meeting, ESCWA members pledged to work together to construct maps and share information in order to improve the water supply in the region.

The meeting concluded with promises of regional cooperation and discussions regarding future methods of attaining water through "remote sensing techniques and ongoing studies of underground aquifers," ESCWA said.

"All of this can only be achieved with a regional understanding which would benefit everyone," Dr. Haddadin concluded. "Perhaps through these procedures, the Middle East and North Africa will become leaders in resolving rapid population growth and halting resource drains."

Mysteries of cloning reveal themselves to Shuneh pumpkin farmer

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A farmer in the south Jordan Valley Monday confirmed having cloned a pumpkin, a research project he has been working on for several years.

"I thought of it long before the Scots created Dolly, the ewe, and the Americans, the simian," said the farmer who requested anonymity.

The cloned pumpkin, on display at his farm house, looked like an exact replica of its "mother": the same size, shape, colour and contours, except perhaps for its little stem which seemed to be tilting left, unlike the original's right.

If the feat would not signify much to a layperson, it gives food for thought and opens unlimited possibilities to experts in several domains.

After all, imagine the delight of a perfectionist host who would want to impress his/her guests with stuffed aubergines, each one the same size, colour, shape.

It could solve the glass manufacturers' dilemma as to how many cucumbers fit into a jar of pickles. So much waste could be avoided and aesthetes would be pleased to see orderly green bells aligning themselves with no gaps or colour blemishes jarring the eye.

Minister announces survey to register indigent groups

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Social Development Mohammad Khair Mamser announced Monday that teams from his ministry will institute a survey to register needy families prior to developing programmes to address their particular needs and provide them with financial and other forms of assistance.

Speaking at a meeting with the National Aid Fund (NAF) board, the minister said that the comprehensive survey would aid the ministry in determining which families still require aid and whether there is need to increase monthly aid to indigent families which currently totals a maximum of JD 60.

In his letter of designation to the new government, His Majesty King Hussein stated that "the people's suffering has reached a level such that these problems should not be left unabated. Unemployment, administrative problems, the economic recession, chaos in the educational system and the

failure to link education with societal needs are all issues which demand swift action and remedy."

Last December, the previous government announced plans for implementing a JD 400 million social security package programme over several years to help the indigent.

Government sources stated at the time that poverty was on the increase and that unemployment rates have risen following the inception of an economic crisis in 1989.

They also named the Gulf crisis as a causative factor, noting that statistics demonstrated that poverty rates rose from three per cent previous to 1989 to 15 per cent last year and that unemployment soared to 25 per cent in the wake of the Gulf war.

Mr. Mamser described the ministry and NAF teams as intensifying field visits to various communities in a bid to reach needy families and ensure their benefit from state aid.

Parliamentary opposition criticises minister of interior's electoral stand

AMMAN (J.T.) — Opposition parties in the Lower House of Parliament Monday criticised a recent announcement by Minister of Interior Nahir Rashid who maintained the government has no intention to increase the number of seats in Parliament nor lower the eligible age of those permitted to vote from 19 to 18 years.

In their own statement, these parties called for modern legislation which, they say, would conform to current political exigencies.

"The minister of interior's statement surprised us as he pledged to neither change nor amend the present electoral law and as he also stated that the public will be charged one dinar for each voting card (permitting entrance into the polls)," the group affirmed.

"Furthermore, the minister's announcement that a temporary law regarding the redistribution of electoral districts and the

government's determination to uphold the existing one-person, one-vote electoral system are unacceptable as these signify that the government continues with plans which disregard Parliament, political parties and other political groups," the statement said.

"The opposition in Parliament expresses its regret over the successive governments' application of temporary laws without benefit of parliamentary consultation and considers this practice undemocratic," it continued.

Affirming that opposition deputies reject the one-person, one-vote system, the statement asserted "the continuation of this practice is a violation of the constitution as this electoral system destroys society, the tribe and the family and does not treat all people equally."

The opposition group decried the government for "tailoring electoral districts

according to its own desires and without regard for the principles of justice and equality."

"We demand a modern, fair law which empowers the public to exercise their right in electing parliamentary representatives and we demand that the government distribute voting cards without charge to all rather than merely to those who can afford to buy them," the statement added.

The opposition demanded that the government open a national dialogue with Parliament and political parties to develop a modern election law.

It also requested that the judiciary be given complete supervision of the electoral process.

The group petitioned the government to remain neutral in the elections to ensure freedom and objectivity.

JAS announces stargazing gatherings

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordan Astronomical Society (JAS) Monday announced that it is organising a "star party" to observe the Hale-Bopp comet in three cities: Amman, Zarqa and Irbid.

Society member Hani Dalee stated that the first of these excursions will convene in Amman today near Jabal Al Qal'ah, in the heart of Amman.

He stated that he expects a large group of interested people to gather at the site to observe the comet through telescopes and binoculars provided by the JAS.

During the excursion, he said, three specialists are

planned to brief the stargazers about the comet.

One of these is JAS President Khalil Kunsol and the society staff will be answering questions in both Arabic and English.

The Hale-Bopp comet is currently visible from earth for the first time in approximately 4,000 years, Mr. Dalee said.

Alan Hale and Thomas Bopp first spotted the comet in 1995 and they believe that the comet may give clues to the earliest moments of the solar system, he affirmed.

Society member Mohammad Shawkat stated that the comet is visible without the aid of tele-

scopes and best spotted on a clear night in the desert or high altitudes.

The comet is nicely viewed in areas with little pollution where it is possible to see the entire length of the comet's tail, he said.

Mr. Shawkat maintained that the comet is currently slanting towards the northwest in the evenings until the middle of April and that it will still be visible with the aid of telescopes until the middle of May, when it nears the sun and disappears for another 2,379 years.

Mr. Dalee said the most convenient time to spy the comet in Amman is from now until April 10 as

the comet is closest to the sun and therefore bright.

The comet Tuesday will be 137 million kilometres away from the sun, Mr. Shawkat added.

The JAS is planning another party in Zarqa on April 6 at the Zarqa Private University at 6:00 p.m., Mr. Dalee said.

The last party will take place in Irbid at Yarmouk University on Monday April 14, he added.

Apart from the aforementioned three gatherings, he said, the JAS is organising a three-day astronomical camp for staff members in Al Azraq desert from April 2 to April 4.

What's Going On

AMMAN THEATRE FESTIVAL

* Jordanian and Tunisian performances entitled "Hi Hu" by Fawanees Theatre and "Dinosaur Autobiography/Theatre 37" respectively at 7:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. at the Royal Cultural Centre.

GERMAN-AMERICAN FILM WEEK

* "The Magnificent Obsession" at the American Centre, Abdoun at 5:00 p.m.

LECTURE

* "The Conflict in the Relationship Between the Educat-

ed and the Authority in the Arab World" (in Arabic) by Dr. Wamid Nazmi at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* The African ceramic arts exhibition at Al Bait Furniture Establishment premises, Mecca Street, until April 10.

* Artworks by Egyptian artist Jamil Shafiq entitled "Black and White" at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 687598), until April 10.

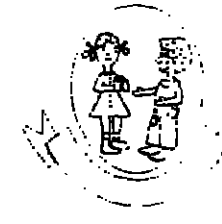
* Spring exhibition 1997 at Orfali Art Gallery, Umm Utheina, until April 6.

* Works by Paris-based Syrian artist Ziad Dalloul at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until April 3. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists.

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Hurry .. Hurry ..
Only Three Days Left ..

I Love You My Friend
You make me happy at EID



DAY EIGHT

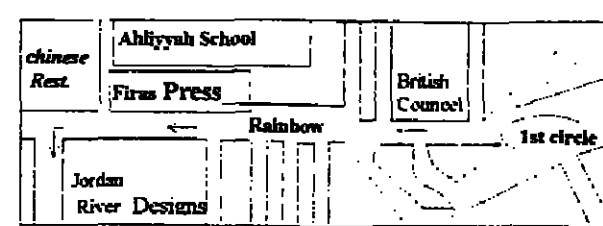
UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF HER ROYAL HIGHNESS
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JORDAN RIVER FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Is organizing a fund raising campaign

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Fakherdin Restaurant



For further information call 613081 or Fax 613083

Defiant Indian PM vows to prove majority as Congress stakes claim

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Defiant Indian Premier H.D. Deve Gowda vowed Monday he would prove his majority in parliament next week as his former ally, the Congress (I) Party, formally staked its claim to power.

Mr. Deve Gowda, given a one-week deadline by President Shankar Dayal Sharma to prove that his minority coalition government would seek a vote of confidence in the 545-seat lower house on April 7.

An official spokesman said the 64-year-old prime minister was determined not to resign after the Congress, which had kept him in power for 10 months, unexpectedly withdrew its parliamentary support and looked to form its own administration.

"A special session will be convened on April 7," he said.

The decision came on a

day of dramatic developments.

The Congress, which has ruled India almost uninterrupted for 50 years since independence in 1947, Monday stunned the United Front with a second body blow by urging it to support a Congress bid for office.

"We supported the United Front government for the last 10 months to keep (Hindu nationalists) out of power and now it is the turn of the United Front to support a Congress coalition," party President Sitaram Kesri said.

Even as the centre-left United Front dismissed the suggestion with contempt, the main opposition Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) prepared to throw its hat into the ring.

The BJP, the largest party in parliament, asked Mr. Deve Gowda to quit. BJP President Lal Krishna

Advani said he favoured fresh elections instead of seeing the Congress make a bid for power.

"The situation is pregnant with so many possibilities," spokeswoman Sushma Swaraj said, hinting the BJP might try forming a government of its own, with help from regional parties.

But Mr. Deve Gowda, facing the most severe crisis in his career, told a meeting of nearly 400 cheering supporters at his residence that he would not resign and instead prove his majority in parliament.

"There is no question of my resigning or suggesting dissolution of the house," he said. Railway Minister Ram Vilas Paswan added: "We are united, and we will remain united."

No party has the strength in parliament to form a government on its own. The BJP and the Congress, the second largest bloc in

the house, would have to hunt for allies to form a coalition.

On Monday, it was not clear who could side with either of them.

The Communists, who have 52 members in parliament and support the Deve Gowda administration, refused to form a coalition with the Congress despite their common hatred of the BJP.

"There can be no principled compromise or manoeuvres," said Harkishan Singh Surjeet of the Communist party of India-Marxist. The smaller Communist party of India echoed those views.

The Congress was voted out in the 1996 elections, and later ended up propping up Mr. Deve Gowda's United Front in office in a bid to keep out the BJP.

But relations between the Congress and Mr. Deve Gowda have strained and Congress Chief Kesri has



Indian policemen chase stone throwing protesters during a strike in the northern city of Jammu March 31. The strike was called by India's main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to protest against a jeep bomb blast in the city which killed 16 people and injured 70 on March 29 (Reuters photo)

been threatening to topple the alliance since taking over the party post in

September. A failure by the BJP and Congress to form a govern-

ment would force the president to dissolve the Lok Sabha and order fresh

elections. India has some 550 million voters.

Albania mourns shipwreck victims; Italy prepares force

TIRANA (R) — Shattered Albania united in grief Monday for refugees who drowned in a shipwreck off Italy, triggering protests against Rome which is preparing a multinational force to protect aid to the lawless country.

Albania's flag — red with a double-headed black eagle — flew at half mast around the country, state television played solemn music and right-wing President Sali Berisha called a minute's silence at midday (1000 GMT).

Tirana reckons that about 80 refugees fleeing unrest died in the Adriatic Friday night after their Russian-built vessel collided with an Italian navy ship. Survivors of one of the Balkan state's worst disasters accused the Italians of ramming it.

Tirana's government of national reconciliation, appointed on March 11 to seek to restore order after armed insurrection that has left much of the south in rebel hands, reiterated that it believed "the incident might have been avoided."

The disaster overshadowed Rome's preparations to lead a U.N.-approved force of about 2,500 police or troops to protect deliveries of food and medicines to Albania, with another 2,500 in reserve.

"Italy is busy assembling the force," said Dutch diplomat Jan de Marchant et d'Ansembourg, the head of a European Union (EU) mission planning aid and security.

He added that advance

units were "not likely before the end of the week." France, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Turkey and Romania have expressed willingness to take part.

Greece was offering about 600 to 1,000 personnel, France 800, diplomats said. Romania planned to send 400 troops, the Romanian news agency Rompres quoted army Chief of General Staff Constantin Degeratu as saying.

A Greek foreign ministry delegation, including experts from the defence, finance, public order and welfare ministries, was due in Tirana later Monday for talks with D'Ansembourg.

Passions over the sinking ran highest in Vlore, the southern port from which the refugee vessel left and one of the two main ports that the Italian-led force is due to secure as a bridgehead for relief supplies.

"I warn Italian soldiers not to come to Vlore, otherwise they will be killed," said Aida, 35, a woman who attended a rally by about 7,000 people on Sunday to mourn the dead.

Thirty-four people survived the sinking and just four bodies were found.

"It is not a good idea to send Italians down there now," D'Ansembourg said. Italy's navy has orders to turn back Albanian refugees after a flood of more than 13,000 in March.

The multinational force is also due to secure the northern port of Durres and

Tirana airport for supplies, running short after the unrest. Albania's crisis was sparked by protests at the failure of savings schemes since late 1996.

D'Ansembourg noted Berisha was firmly in favour of the multinational force. Parliament voted overwhelmingly to accept it on Sunday, two days after the sinking.

Italy, which invaded Albania in 1914 and 1939, has become Tirana's closest Western partner since Albania's Stalinist communism collapsed in 1990.

Rome sent 500 unarmed troops for two years from 1991 to guard aid deliveries and seek to discourage a flood of refugees.

D'Ansembourg said he planned to fly to Rome on Wednesday or Thursday for talks after compiling a report on aid needs. Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi has pledged to press ahead with assembling the force.

Much of southern Albania, including Vlore, remains outside government control after mayhem earlier this month when arms depots were looted. Most foreigners were evacuated by helicopter or ship.

Violence in Albania apparently slackened over a long Easter weekend with the Albanian state news agency reported just one shooting death, in Elbasan Saturday. Scores of people have died in unrest in Albania in March.

Outrage at Bosnian Serb bid for customs union with Belgrade

SARAJEVO (AFP) — Bosnian leaders and international peace officials hit out Monday at an agreement they said was in the pipeline to create a customs union between the Bosnian Serbs and their erstwhile patrons in Belgrade.

A spokesman for High Representative Carl Bildt, the top peace monitor in Bosnia, said that a customs agreement had been reached but not yet signed by the authorities in Belgrade and the Bosnian Serb entity.

"If political secession of the Republika Srpska was not on the cards, economic

secession is not on the cards either, and would be more difficult to achieve given the mutual interaction of all parts of Europe economically," Bildt's spokesman Colum Murphy said.

"It is probably an attempt to produce a greater degree of economy autonomy, but we believe it is not possible."

The customs union accord follows hot on the heels of a controversial pact between the Bosnian Serbs and Belgrade, which originally supported the Serb secession bid in 1992 that triggered the Bosnian conflict.

Bildt has roundly condemned that accord, which provides for closer ties between the Serbs and Belgrade, saying that it violated the letter of the Dayton peace agreement.

Bosnian Foreign Trade Minister Hasan Muratovic meanwhile rounded on the idea of a customs union between Federal Yugoslavia and the Serbs, who under Dayton are granted a degree of autonomy within Bosnia, but no right to secession.

Muratovic said the accord would jeopardise the adoption of customs legislation which joint institutions in Bosnia are supposed to be pushing through.

China says no political prisoners

BEIJING (R) — China said Monday it had no political prisoners although more than 2,000 people were in jail for "counter-revolutionary" crimes, a codeword for subversion.

As China prepared for its annual tussle against censure by the United States and some European countries at the United Nations human rights convention in Geneva, the State Council, or cabinet, issued a white paper defending its record and saying legal reforms were ensuring basic freedoms.

China had imprisoned 2,026 people for counter-revolutionary crimes — Communist jargon for subversion — but such inmates could not be considered political prisoners, said Zhang Xiufu, executive vice-minister of justice.

"In China counter-revolutionary prisoners are not political prisoners, they are prisoners who have endangered national security... Or have conducted activities to overthrow the political power of China," Mr. Zhang told a news conference.

In its annual human rights report for 1996, the U.S. State Department said Beijing had effectively silenced public dissent by jailing or exiling virtually every active dissident.

Many dissidents — such as former student leader Wang Dan serving an 11-year term — have been sentenced under the sweeping charge of counter-revolution.

Those who had been jailed for crimes of counter-revolution had been convicted of carrying out activities endangering national security and not because of their views, Mr. Zhang said. China's National People's Congress, or parliament, this month passed amendments to the criminal law scrapping the charge of counter-revolution and creating separate crimes for offences it once covered.

Refugees in Zaire urged to move by rebel deadline

GOMA, Zaire (R) — Aid workers urged 20,000 Rwandan refugees Monday to trek south of the rebel-held northeastern capital of Kisangani for their own security in line with a rebel deadline.

Rebels said they were ready for talks with President Mobutu Sese Seko's representatives Thursday, probably in South Africa, to prepare for a meeting between him and rebel chief Laurent Kabila.

Kilian Kleinschmidt of the U.N. refugee agency in Kisangani said moving the refugees from Lulu, seven kilometres south of Kisangani, to 19 kilometres south of the city was delayed by the killing of three Zairean traders late Sunday.

"Three traders were killed at kilometre four, reportedly by ex-far, last night so there was a search (by rebels) and some armed elements were found and were arrested or something," he said.

The Tutsi-dominated rebels, who seized Kisangani on March 15, say the Hutu Rwandan and Burundian refugees must move away from Kisangani for security reasons as they might include former members of the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) and Hutu militiamen.

The ex-FAR and former Interahamwe militiamen had a leading role in the 1994 genocide of up to 800,000 Tutsis and Hutu moderates in Rwanda and have fought alongside Zairean troops against the rebels.

"The (rebel) principle is still that everyone at Lulu has to move today and especially with that security incident it is good to get them to move to get this tension defused," Kleinschmidt told Reuters.

"We are talking to the refugees now and they will walk to kilometre 19 and only those who are too vulnerable or too weak will be

transported there by trucks," he added by telephone.

He said the refugees had said they would cooperate.

Aid workers said the 20,000 at Lulu were in better shape than up to 60,000 further south of Kisangani as the weakest and most vulnerable were left behind fleeing rebel advances since November.

The rebels have seized a quarter of Africa's third largest country since October and are following a strategy of fighting while talking in their bid to oust Mr. Mobutu, who has ruled since 1965.

In Kinshasa, airport officials said an explosion killed a Zairean man in a customs office at the capital's international airport early Monday and a second man was slightly hurt.

Soldiers sealed the area off and launched an investigation.

The rebel Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL) said Monday they were ready for talks with President Mobutu Sese Seko's representatives Thursday.

Mwanze Kongolo, justice commissioner in the AFDL, told Reuters the talks almost certainly would be in South Africa.

A ceasefire, the departure of Mr. Mobutu and the integration of the Zairean government and rebel armies would be the main issues for an eventual meeting between both leaders, he said. The rebels have repeatedly refused a ceasefire before negotiations.

Kongolo said Bizima Karaha, who lead a rebel delegation to an Organisation of African Unity summit in the Togolese capital Lome last week, would lead the rebel team to the talks with Mr. Mobutu's representatives.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Three killed on Tajik-Afghan border

ALMATY, Kazakhstan (R) — Russian border guards shot dead three people trying to cross into Tajikistan from neighbouring Afghanistan late Sunday, a Russian military spokesman said Monday. The spokesman for the border troops, speaking from the Tajik capital Dushanbe, said the three had tried to cross the Pyandzh River, which marks part of the border in the south of the country, in an inflatable dinghy. It was the second incident in just two days. Three people were shot late Friday and a border guards spokesman said they were trying to smuggle drugs into Tajikistan.

Tamil Tigers kill two soldiers

COLOMBO (AFP) — Tamil Tiger guerrillas set off a mine killing two soldiers in northern Sri Lanka as security forces recovered a large haul of bombs made by the rebels, the defence ministry said Monday. The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) set off the powerful Claymore mine at Kokuvil in the peninsula of Jaffna on Sunday, the ministry said. The attack came as troops found at least 500 hand grenades and 130 mortar bombs manufactured by the LTTE in the Chavakachcheri sector of the Jaffna peninsula, officials said.

Cambodians mourn bomb attack victims

PHNOM PENH (R) — Cambodians Monday mourned the victims of a weekend grenade attack on an opposition protest that killed at least 14 people while the interior ministry said it was still unclear who was responsible. The attack outside the national assembly in central Phnom Penh Sunday morning was the worst and most blatant act of political violence to hit Cambodia's fragile democracy since the current coalition government came to power after United Nations-organised general elections in May 1993. Protest leader and apparent target Sam Rainsy, who narrowly escaped injury, Sunday blamed the attack on his bitter foe, co-premier Hun Sen, but a spokesman for the information ministry said it was unclear who was responsible and that an investigation was underway.

Basque party calls for 'day of struggle'

VITORIA, Spain (AFP) — A leading Basque separatist party called Monday for a day of action later this week to protest the death last week of a suspected member of the separatist movement ETA. The Herri Batasuna coalition, ETA's political wing, called for the "day of struggle" on Friday in protest at the death last Thursday of Josu Zabala, found dead with a bullet in his chest more than two years after he first disappeared. Herri Batasuna accused the state of assassinating the ETA activist, but regional Interior Minister Juan Maria Anutxa said on Sunday that it was looking more and more likely that Zabala committed suicide.

Peru peace brokers on upbeat mood

LIMA (R) — Peace brokers in Peru's 15-week hostage siege said Sunday they believed that despite a low point in negotiations a bloodless way out would be found. "We are working together towards a quick, peaceful solution," Canadian Ambassador Anthony Vincent told reporters. Mr. Vincent, Peruvian Archbishop Juan Cipriani and Red Cross representative Michel Minnig form a peace guarantors team seeking a negotiated end to 103 days of captivity for 72 hostages held by Marxist rebels at the Japanese ambassador's residence. Arch. Cipriani said after separate meetings with government representative Domingo Palermo and rebel leaders: "The talks have not broken down. We are continually talking to the MRTA (rebels) and the government. We are trying to move as fast as possible."

Hanbo defendants make tearful apologies

SEOUL (AFP) — Associates of South Korea's President Kim Young-Sam made tearful apologies in court Monday for accepting "customary political donations" from the scandal-tainted Hanbo conglomerate. Former Home Minister Kim Suk-Wook broke down into sobs at the trial of 10 high-profile figures indicted in the loans-for-kickbacks scandal. "I fully repent for causing concern to the president and the nation," he said. But Mr. Kim, charged with accepting \$228,000 when in office for granting Hanbo a construction project, said he took the money not as a bribe but as a political donation. Hanbo has become a major political scandal since it collapsed in January under \$5.2 billion of debts. The group was found to have acquired massive loans without collateral. Hwang Byong-Tae, a ruling party lawmaker indicted for graft, also made a tearful apology. "I bow and apology to the people," he said.

China Justice Ministry confirms detention of disgraced aide

BEIJING (AFP) — China's Vice Justice Minister Zhang Niu confirmed Monday that Bao Tong, personal aide to China's disgraced party Secretary Zhao Ziyang, was still in detention despite completing his prison term.

"After Bao Tong's release, he still had two years' deprivation of political rights, so there are certain agencies that are managing his case," Mr. Zhang told a media briefing.

"Bao Tong is not now at his home, but this situation is necessary, and the competent departments are looking after him well," he added.

Mr. Bao, 65, was the personal aide to Mr. Zhao when he lost his job because of the 1989 student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square.

He was the highest-level official jailed because of the incident and when he completed his seven-year term for "leaking state secrets" in May 1996, he was driven straight to a secretive government work unit and not allowed to leave his room for any reason.

His son Bao Pu launched an urgent appeal to the U.N. working group on arbitrary detention on March 12, after authorities in the work unit — the state council-owned Xishan management office — refused to bring him food.

The letter ensured the resumption of supplies, and after two more letters to China's top leadership from Bao Tong's wife, Jiang Zongcai, the authorities took him to a back specialist on March 26.

"Bao Tong has been unable to sleep for months because of strong pains across his shoulders and down his arms, and they finally took him to have an X-ray and see a doctor last Wednesday," Ms. Jiang told AFP in a telephone interview.

"The doctor said he had slipped some discs in his upper back but needed to have physiotherapy every day to stop the pain," she said, adding there had been no further hospital visits.

According to Bao's wife

and children, the Chinese government has said it will only release Mr. Bao if the family first moves out of the apartment that Mr. Bao was given before he was convicted.

But the family says there are no grounds for Mr. Bao's detention and once he is released, everything else can be negotiated.

"Bao Tong's (previous) residence was provided by the government and some government agencies think it is inappropriate to give him ministerial-level housing, so there is still some discussion on the provision of his house," Mr. Zhang said.

China routinely adds two years' deprivation of political rights to the end of prison terms, but according to legal experts, there are no legal provisions which warrant a further detention because of this.

The deprivation of political rights is the temporary removal of the right to vote and to free expression.



OKLAHOMA BLAST: Abra Chusid from Chicago Sunday reads one of the thousands of memorials that hang from the fence surrounding the vacant lot where the Oklahoma City federal building stood before it was destroyed by a bomb blast in 1995. Bombing suspect Timothy McVeigh's trial was scheduled to begin with jury selection in Denver Monday, and in Oklahoma City bombing victims of the bombing and their relatives will be watching a special closed-circuit broadcast of the proceedings (Reuters photo)

Coroner begins releasing Heaven's Gate cult bodies

RANCHO SANTA FE, California (R)

Authorities Sunday began releasing some of the bodies of 39 people who committed mass suicide as part of a strange religious ritual amid conflicting reports about the health of the group's leader. According to Cable News Network (CNN) and Newsweek magazine, members of the Heaven's Gate cult believed Marshall Applewhite was dying of cancer, but San Diego County medical examiner Brian Blackbourne said the autopsy on Applewhite, 65, showed that he did not suffer from terminal cancer.

All 39 members of the obscure religious cult killed themselves over a period of several days by eating drug-laced pudding or apple-sauce, washing it down with vodka and putting a plastic bag over their heads.

Blackbourne said some of the cult members died from the drugs, but that others suffocated.

According to videotaped suicide messages, the cultists believed a spaceship hiding behind the Hale-Bopp comet nearing Earth would take them to heaven.

The bodies were discovered Wednesday in the \$1.6 million mansion the group rented in the exclusive San Diego suburb of Rancho Santa Fe.

On Sunday the mansion was guarded by private security officers, but that did not prevent curious onlookers from stopping by the site to catch a glimpse of what has been dubbed the "mansion of death."

"We were out for a drive and came here out of curiosity," said Ed Bayes, who arrived with friends Sunday morning to take pictures. "You see it so many times on TV. If you have the opportunity to see it in person, you do it."

Until Wednesday little was known about the cult, even though the group had talked extensively about their beliefs on computer web pages and in videos.

On Saturday Rick Singer, a Los Angeles television and movie producer, said the group had also hoped to make a movie about their beliefs about life on Earth and moving on to the "kingdom of God."

"I was shocked," he said Saturday about their suicide pact. "They were a little weird the way they looked and dressed, but they were so eager and so enthusiastic."

Entitled "Beyond human: Return of the next level," Singer said the cult's screenplay featured motherhood, alien abductions and clashes between bad reptile-like aliens and benevolent ones for control of Earth. It told of the ability to "rise up" to a level several heights above humans.

On Sunday medical examiners started to release some of the bodies to local funeral homes. So far only the family of 40-year-old Erika Ernst has shown up to claim her body and belongings.

While all of the victims have been identified, investigators from the medical examiner's office said they were still trying to find relatives of four of the victims. The strange circumstances surrounding the suicides left many experts wondering what could have led a group of intelligent computer web page designers to believe they could reach heaven by connecting with a UFO.

Yeltsin approves watered down Russia-Belarus union accord

MOSCOW (AFP) —

Russian President Boris Yeltsin approved an upcoming accord Monday on modest steps towards integration between Russia and Belarus, after Moscow apparently watered down a highly controversial earlier draft.

The approved draft, which builds on a preliminary accord reached last year, weakened an earlier version criticised as threatening Russia's economic reforms and sovereignty, according to politicians who saw the document.

Aman Tuleyev, minister for relations with the Commonwealth of Independent States, announced that under the accord to be signed Wednesday, Russians and Belarussians will have joint citizenship, but stressed that a supranational upper council overseeing integration will have only limited powers.

The upper council will "not take any decision except those concerning Russian-Belarusian partnership," Mr. Tuleyev was quoted as saying by ITAR-TASS news agency. He added that the two republics will not share the same currency.

On April 3, Russians will wake up in Russia and Belarussians in Belarus," Mr. Tuleyev said. "That way, there will be no question of Russia or Belarus running each other."

Kremlin Foreign Affairs Advisor Dmitry Ryurikov, quoted by ITAR-TASS, said changes could still be made before Wednesday when Yeltsin and Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko sign the accord. Russia's RTR television

Sunday showed what it said were leaked copies of an earlier draft in which Belarus and Russia would enter a single economic system with a joint governing body, the upper council, which would be headed alternately by Russia and Belarus.

RTR commentator Nikolai Zvanidze said the early draft called for a "socially-orientated economy," unified monetary and foreign currency exchange policies, and coordination of foreign policy.

Liberal Izvestia newspaper analyst Otto Lutsis singled out the provision in the leaked draft for equal decision-making powers, given that the population of Russia is 150 million compared to 10 million in Belarus.

The draft had been kept so secret that only a handful of

government officials — not including even Mr. Yeltsin, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin or other top ministers — had seen it a week ago, television reported.

Liberal former Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar warned against the consequences for Russia's inflation level.

Gaidar also said that Moscow's turning of a blind eye to Lukashenko's crack-down on opposition parties and the press "could take us on the path to exactly the same thing happening in Russia."

The confusion over the contents of the document, just days away from its signing, was due to a deep split within the Russian government, Interfax quoted unnamed sources in the Kremlin and government as saying.

"There are two camps

whose positions are totally opposed," a source told Interfax.

One camp wanted to plunge into a union where power was shared between the two countries, while the other wanted a gas-slow, evolutionary approach, Interfax said.

Leftist politicians in both countries, many of whom support recreating the Soviet Union, have been at the forefront of rapid integration between Russia and Belarus.

Communist leader Genady Zyuganov said the approved version of the accord would be a "very modest step in the restoration of union relations with Belarus." Leftist Russian Parliamentary Deputy Sergei Baburin said he was "amazed at the extent to which the document has been emasculated."

S. Korea allows more private-level food aid to North

SEOUL (R) — In a fresh goodwill gesture to North Korea, South Korea Monday lifted a ban on private organizations providing rice to the impoverished nation.

Seoul will also permit local business groups to join food aid programmes for Communist North Korea, the National Unification Ministry said.

In the past, only local religious and human rights groups and individual South Koreans could ship non-rice food aid to the North. Seoul had in the past banned shipments of rice, saying it could be diverted to the military.

"The government hopes the move will have a positive impact on inter-Korea relations," said Lee Jong-Riol, director-general at the ministry's Humanitarian Affairs Bureau.

The private sector food aid will continue to be channelled through South Korea's Red Cross, Mr. Lee said.

"All food aid to North Korea should go through the Red Cross to make sure aid will be delivered to the needed people," Mr. Lee told reporters.

Government officials said the ministry had accepted appeals from private organizations that rice, the main staple in the North, be included in food aid to the country.

"It is important for the North Korean authorities to guarantee the transparency of the process of food distribution... If the North wants a further expansion of food aid from the South," a ministry statement said.

Mr. Lee said South Korean companies could now contribute aid to various business

groups. The aid will then be passed on to the Red Cross for delivery to the North. No limit has been set for the size of contributions.

Monday's move is the latest goodwill gesture by South Korea which is trying to lure the North to four-nation peace talks jointly proposed by U.S. President Bill Clinton and South Korean President Kim Young-Sam last April.

The talks, which would include China, are aimed at securing a formal treaty to replace a truce that ended the 1950-53 Korean War, which technically still leaves the two Koreas at war.

Seoul officials said North Korea offered its first formal response to the proposal for talks Wednesday, demanding substantial food aid at a meeting in New York.

The United States and South Korea insisted there could be no preconditions to the talks but suggested more aid could flow once talks began.

International aid agencies say North Korea, devastated by two consecutive years of floods, is weeks away from famine.

Separately, a South Korean trade specialist was visiting Pyongyang to pave the way for business ventures.

Hong Ji-Seon, who heads the North Korea department at the state-run Korea Trade/Investment Promotion Agency, is to arrange a business forum to encourage South Korean business officials to use North Korea as a processing base for textiles and other labour-intensive manufacturing.

He is due to remain in Pyongyang until Saturday.

French far rightists finalise battle plan for '98 elections

STRASBOURG, France (R)

Jean-Marie Le Pen's far-right National Front, boasting of its pariah status in French politics, put the finishing touches Monday to its battle plan for breaking into parliament in 1998 elections.

On the final day of a three-day congress in Strasbourg, eastern France, would-be candidates cheered when front leaders assured them that, contrary to rumours, they would not be taxed for the privilege of running on the party's ticket.

In addition, the national organisation would potter some 40,000 to 60,000 francs (some \$7,000 to \$10,000) into each of France's 577 constituencies where they had candidates, in the form of videos, posters and pamphlets, to help the party gain a foothold in parliament, where it now has no deputies.

The political establishment condemns the front as a fringe party that is racist and xenophobic. Surveys to date have suggested it would not win a single seat.

But Mr. Le Pen has been

basking in the media spotlight after winning a fourth city hall last month and pressuring the centre-right government into beefing up France's already tight immigration laws.

He predicted Sunday that the front will win at least "10 or 20 seats" in the March 1998 poll.

The front president, who has denied he is racist or anti-semitic, told delegates in a fiery hour-long speech Sunday that his supporters were excluded from the French mainstream.

He compared them to "a caste of less-than-citizens, pariahs who remind us of plague victims during the middle ages or the Jews of Nazi Germany."

He was scheduled to close the congress later Monday with his third speech, this one scheduled for an hour and a half.

A loose coalition of anti-front groups, meanwhile, maintained a feverish schedule of demonstrations and protests at the front's presence in the city that is home to the

European Parliament and the Council of Europe, which promotes democracy and human rights across the continent.

City residents were invited to a mass picnic in the city centre Monday evening.

Strasbourg's Socialist Mayor Catherine Trautmann, an outspoken front foe whom Mr. Le Pen calls "Cathy the red," Saturday led an estimated 40,000 protesters in a long march in protest at the front's growing influence.

But the demonstration was marred when some protesters later threw bottles, and shot flare guns at police, who responded with teargas and a water cannon. As the Front Congress neared its end, the 2,200 delegates adopted, point by point, a party platform for the 1998 parliamentary election which, among other things, would give salaries to mothers without paying jobs and repeal a law which bans incitement of racial, ethnic or religious hatred.

Mr. Le Pen was re-elected president by acclamation Sunday.

Clinton to nominate Clark as NATO commander

WASHINGTON (R)

President Bill Clinton has chosen U.S. Army Gen. Wesley Clark to become commander of all allied NATO forces in Europe and head of U.S. forces in Europe, a senior Pentagon official said Monday.

Clark, 52, speaks Russian and was a key member of the American team that helped broker the 1995 Dayton peace accords on Bosnia. He is currently based in Panama as commander of U.S. Forces in Latin America and would replace retiring U.S. Army Gen. George Joulwan in the NATO job at Mons, Belgium.

The Pentagon official, who asked not to be identified, confirmed a Washington Post

report that announcement of the nomination, which would require approval from other Atlantic alliance countries, could come as early as Monday.

"The job of SACEUR (supreme allied commander of NATO forces Europe) and of commander of U.S. troops in Europe requires somebody to be both a soldier and a statesman, to deal not only with military officials but the leaders of governments and Russia," the official said. "Clark fills the bill," said the official, adding that defence secretary William Cohen had recommended the general to Clinton after interviewing more than a dozen potential candidates.

The job of SACEUR has



Gen. Wesley Clark

been held by U.S. military officers since the end of the World War II and Clark, a West Point Military Academy graduate and former Rhodes scholar who attended England's Oxford University, is expected to be approved by the allies, according to the Pentagon official.

Romania shocked by teenager's brutal killing of 11-year-old

BUCHAREST (AFP) —

Romanians were in shock Monday after the brutal killing of an 11-year-old which the teenage suspect said was inspired by a television film.

The body of Stefan Parlog was found by neighbours in a cellar Saturday. Pictures shown on Romanian television showed graphically how his head had been dashed against a wall while his hands were tied behind his back. He was left on the ground with his head in a plastic bag.

Ciprian T., 14, told police in the northern town of Iasi that he had asked Stefan, a friend of his, to play along with him in a simulated kidnapping after sending Stefan's parents a ransom note for \$15,000.

When the younger boy refused, Ciprian T. said he struck him until he passed out. "A crime worse than in American TV series," the

popular daily Evenimentul Zilei said on its front page. The country's other newspapers all led with the tragic killing apparently inspired by "an American film scenario."

The Romanian press had followed the affair closely since Stefan's parents reported his disappearance. The couple had prepared the ransom money, but were never re-contacted over arrangements for his handover. Before the murder came to light, the alleged killer had appeared in an impassioned television appeal for the return of the missing boy.

With calculating cynicism, Ciprian T. implored: "Stefan, come home, the joke's over. Your parents are waiting for you." Police said they were surprised at Ciprian T.'s "intellectual capacities", which they said were far superior to the average adolescent delinquent.

Unionists, Sinn Fein praise Labour's N. Ireland overtures

LONDON (AFP) — Parties

at both ends of the political spectrum in Northern Ireland welcomed Monday an initiative by the opposition Labour Party to break the deadlock in the peace process by encouraging a new ceasefire in the troubled province.

David Ervine, leader of the pro-British Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) and Martin McGuinness, number two in the Nationalist Sinn Fein, both hailed Labour's declaration of the policy it would pursue if as expected it wins the British general election on May 1.

"It is interesting that the secretary of state is waiting so to speak has gone as far as she dare," Mr. Ervine said of Labour's Northern Ireland spokeswoman Marjorie "Mo" Mowlam, who said Saturday that the IRA's political wing Sinn Fein could join multi-party peace talks if an IRA ceasefire was rein-

stated.

"I think they (Labour) are making reasonable sounds towards Sinn Fein so they have absolutely no excuse for continuing the violence," he told the BBC.

"Mo Mowlam has laid the ground if the IRA want to take it."

Mr. McGuinness for his part said he was "obviously encouraged" by Ms. Mowlam's proposals to set a specific date, June 3, for Sinn Fein's admission to the stalled talks.

"I obviously have mixed views about all of it," he added. "It's regrettable that the Labour Party did not adopt a more challenging position about the negativity of (Prime Minister) John Major at an earlier stage."

But despite her weekend overtures, Ms. Mowlam rejected Sinn Fein calls for bilateral Sinn Fein-Labour talks.

"Martin McGuinness must understand that there is no prospect of any discussions of any sort between Sinn Fein and a Labour government unless the IRA introduce and guarantee a permanent and meaningful ceasefire by word and deed," said Ms. Mowlam, likely to be Britain's next Northern Ireland secretary.

"That has always been our position and remains our position."

Sinn Fein has been excluded from peace talks pending a restoration by its military wing, the Irish Republican Army (IRA), of a ceasefire shattered in February 1996.

The talks themselves petered out earlier this month pending the British elections with little significant progress on the thorny issue of weapons decommissioning. Nationalist and Loyalist parties to the talks have failed to agree even on an agenda.

Japan prime minister vows to push new law for U.S. bases

TOKYO (R) — Japanese

Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, moving to tackle his biggest political problem, vowed Monday to push through legislation to extend land leases for U.S. military bases beyond a may deadline.

"This is a question of whether we fulfil our obligation under the U.S.-Japan security treaty and so is a matter of our nation's existence," Mr. Hashimoto told a news conference.

It was the first time Mr. Hashimoto had formally confirmed he would submit a bill to parliament revising the land expropriation laws, an

issue which has become the most pressing domestic headache for his government.

The new legislation will, in effect, give the Japanese government a temporary extension of its leases on land occupied by the U.S. bases after the current contracts expire. Mr. Hashimoto faces a May 14 deadline on the leases on land owned by some 3,000 people on Japan's southern Okinawa island, who are refusing to renew the contracts. Another 29,000 landowners have already agreed to renew their leases.

At stake are a series of

mainly small plots of land totalling 36 hectares (89 acres) on 12 bases including the U.S. Air force's huge Kadena Air Base.

The case is now before an Okinawan land expropriation committee, whose decision to renew leases was not expected before the May deadline because of a lengthy hearing process.

Mr. Hashimoto also said he would not ask U.S. President Bill Clinton to withdraw U.S. troops from Japan because of uncertainties in the region's security. Mr. Hashimoto is expected to visit Washington in late April for talks with Mr. Clinton.

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Reversibility again an option

GIVEN THE Israeli government's obstinate attitudes towards the Oslo accords, it was no surprise that the Arab League Foreign Ministers acted the way it did when it recommended during their meeting in Cairo Sunday the freezing of ties with Israel, the suspension of Arab participation in multilateral peace talks and the reintroduction of the boycott regime against the Jewish state. The wording of the Arab League Foreign Ministers' resolution could have been made stronger by "demanding" rather than "recommending" the rolling back of relations with Israel. The adoption of the watered-down formula was obviously meant as a clear message: for the time being the Arab side wishes to leave the door open for now but would be prepared to go further should Israel maintain its dangerous attitudes vis-a-vis the peace process as a whole.

Even in its current formulation, though, the Arab League's resolution has teeth to it. Arab countries would be hard-pressed not to heed the unanimous Arab recommendation to put on hold the normalisation process with Israel as long as the Netanyahu government persists in flouting agreements with the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). How the Arab World will deal with this recommendation, will obviously be determined by what happens next. If the Israeli prime minister continues his acts of defiance against the entire international community over his settlement policies in East Jerusalem and on other contentious issues, then each and every Arab state would become obliged to translate this recommendation into practical steps.

Unfortunately, albeit predictably, the Israeli reaction to the Cairo resolution was one of defiance and ridicule. The Foreign Ministry's immediate response was to reject the Arab "ultimatum," as harmful to both sides and not only to Israel. While we may concede that normalisation of relations could bring gains to both sides and its suspension harms them, the fact that the Arab side is willing to sacrifice this "potential gain" in order to deny Israel the comfort of living with "friendly neighbours" is something that could work to convince Israeli policy-makers, especially the right-wing and the ultra-nationalist elements among them, that the Middle East risks edging closer to a new abyss unless they reconsider their priorities.

More important than formal relations between the states of the region is peace among its peoples. It is within Israel's grasp to make the ultimate decision of whether it seeks to nurture true and genuine peace based on the faithful interpretation and implementation of mutual agreements, and the relevant U.N. Security Council resolutions which have served as the foundation for the Madrid conference in 1991, or push the region into another cycle of violence and hostility. There is little doubt that in the face of continued recalcitrance by Netanyahu the Arab states will have to harden rather than soften their determination to be tough with Israel. Where that road will lead, it is not difficult to foresee. Sadly, the reversibility of the peace process has once again become an option.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

COMMENTING ON a recent visit of U.S. envoy Dennis Ross to the Middle East, Al Asswaq said the visit coincided with the convening in Morocco of the Jerusalem Committee which condemned Israel's practices in the Holy City. The committee has reaffirmed the Arab countries' adherence to the peace process despite the Israeli violations of peace accords and the ongoing work on the construction of the Jewish settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim, said the paper. If the U.S. wants to take a new initiative to end the deadlock in the peace process, said the paper, there is no alternative but to exercise some kind of pressure on Benjamin Netanyahu in order to force him to comply with the peace requirements. It is to be noted that the U.S., which has assumed the role of the sole sponsor of the peace process, is duty bound to ensure that it is free of obstacles, all of Israel's make, continued the paper. It said the U.S. has vowed to intensify its efforts at the diplomatic level to end the deadlock and therefore it will be illogical for Washington to remain passive in the face of Israel's violations; it should be stressed here that the U.S. can by no means retain credibility if it fails to exercise some pressure on Mr. Netanyahu. The Palestine National Authority and the rest of the Arab states have provided proof that they are committed to peace based on justice and therefore, said the paper, the U.S. administration is called on to force Israel to end its settlement programmes so as to secure the continuation of the peace process.

A WRITER for Al Bilad weekly commended Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali's efforts to strengthen Jordan's relations with Iraq and said that time has come for Jordan to protect its interests and maintain its ties with all Arab states. Nayef Tawarah, said Jordan must turn a new page and transcend the period that witnessed exchanged recriminations and accusations between Amman and Baghdad over the past events and policies and embark on practical steps for restoring the strongest possible ties between the two sides, based on mutual respect. The writer referred to the previous government's futile attempts to mend fences with Kuwait and said that whatever Jordan has done towards that end has ended in failure as Kuwait is difficult to appease. He said that time has come for Jordan to put matters in their right perspective and realise that its interests lie with Iraq and with dealing with other Arab states in the same way they deal with Jordan.

The View from Fourth Circle

Throw hard, Madeleine, and throw well

By Rami G. Khouri

THERE IS potentially some very good news for the world today: Madeleine Albright, the United States secretary of state, is throwing out the first pitch at the opening day game of the North American baseball league in Baltimore, Maryland. Her Secret Service agents have been teaching her how to throw a baseball, for she never played the game as a child. Her mastery of the art of pitching a baseball, in a real baseball stadium, can only promote her own balance, composure, relaxation and inner calm, which, in turn, can only contribute positively to the quest for world peace and justice.

The spirit and consciousness of baseball are matched by its complex physics and its folklore in the gallery of great things that America has given the world. There are many dimensions to the game of baseball that are only appreciated by those around the world who play the game, and especially those who have played it throughout their lives. Madeleine Albright comes to the game relatively late in life, but nevertheless she will appreciate and enjoy elements of the totality of baseball's multiple attractions reflecting primordial life experiences, neighbourhood landscapes, community identities and transitions from childhood to adolescence to adulthood — what the American author Alan Lelchuk in his novel Brooklyn Boy so succinctly referred to as "beauty, relaxation, tribal warmth, folk art".

She has missed out on much, but she can still enjoy much as well, if she works diligently and masters the art and craft of pitching a baseball. She must learn how to throw a hard, stitched ball in a relatively straight line at a very fast speed over a distance of some 22 metres with aim of passing directly over a 17-inch-wide, five-sided, rubberized home plate at a point not higher than an average person's stomach and not lower than the knees. Nothing that she has done in her life — nothing in diplomacy, academia, family life or public service — can prepare Madeleine Albright to achieve this feat. She enters genuinely uncharted territory.

She will have to learn the wind-up that generates the power to deliver the pitch — a coordinated contortion of the body that has feet, legs, arms, head, shoulders and torso all moving nearly in tandem, with the single purpose of achieving an equation in the body's physics that generates maximum torque and thus speed of delivery of the ball. She will have to watch her feet and make sure that they are properly positioned on the rectangular strip of thick rubber on the ground known as the pitching plate.

At the same time, she will have to grip the ball just right, with the fingers wrapped around the ball but not holding it too tightly, and she will have to remember to release the ball at precisely the right spot as her hand passes over and in front of her shoulder and starts its downward rotation. If she releases too soon,

the ball will sail away into the air far above home plate; if she releases too late, the ball will crash into the dirt well before it reaches the plate. As she lets go of the ball, she will have to remember simultaneously to let it roll off her fingers while slightly snapping her wrist, to get maximum speed, good spin and accurate placement of the ball at its point of crossing over home plate.

"She (Albright) will learn about force and counter-force, about symmetry, about balance, about the importance of consistent rules and principles of adjudication, and about remembering the force of past humiliations that must be avenged. She will interact with the world with a greater sense of accomplishment and self-confidence, and — most importantly — humility, which are good attributes for the American secretary of state to have, in the view of the rest of the world."

She will probably throw a simple fast ball, gripped with three fingers, thrown from almost directly overhead, and sent on a straight trajectory that aims to beat the batter purely by speed and position of passage over the plate. She may shun prudence and attempt something more daring, maybe dramatic, perhaps even devious. If she has had time to practise seriously, she may attempt to throw any of several pitches that move in any of several directions, either on their way to the plate or as they reach the plate. Her personal penchant for snake brooches makes me suspect she might throw a slider, a sneaky and difficult pitch that slides down and away from the batter as it reaches the plate.

She could also try a curve ball that appears to be coming straight at you and then suddenly and sharply breaks down and to the side as it crosses the plate — such a pitch perhaps being in keeping with the non-linear nature of her diplomatic vocation. Or she could attempt a change-up, a pitch which deceives the batter into thinking that a fast ball has been thrown when in

fact, because of the manner in which it is held in the hand and released, the ball approaches the plate some 20 per cent slower than usual and thus totally upsets the batter's timing; perhaps, given the element of chance and duplicity involved, this may be an appropriate pitch for these days of stepped-up American engagement in Middle East diplomacy.

There are three essential components of Madeleine Albright's odyssey to the pitcher's mound at Camden Yards in Baltimore today, and they are, respectively, personal, national and global in their true significance: — a. the preparation — the hours that she will spend learning to throw a baseball, finally, happily experiencing simultaneously the joys of mastering the mechanics of pitching and the full pleasures of American childhood and citizenship which she was denied as a youth; her life will be richer for this, regardless of what happens after today.

— b. the execution and result — the actual delivery of the pitch she throws today and its success or failure, measured primarily, in this case, by whether it crosses within generous proximity of the plate, with little concern for speed, movement or form, replaying for the many millionth time that lonely rite of passage that the American writer Roger Angell described 30 years ago in these words: "The pitcher, immobile on the mound, holds the inert white ball, his little lump of physics. Now, with abrupt gestures, he gives it enormous speed and direction, converting it suddenly into a line, a moving line." If she throws a good pitch, a strike over the plate, she shall have added to the already substantial edifice of American self-congratulatory triumphalism. A bad pitch, rightly, will be excused on the basis of insufficient practice time.

— c. the consequences — whether she delivers a good or a poor pitch today, there is no doubt in my mind that Madeleine Albright will experience the consequences of this week in several positive ways, both personal and political (other than that she will have a lot more to talk about with her Japanese and Cuban colleagues). She will learn about force and counter-force, about symmetry, about balance, about the importance of consistent rules and principles of adjudication, and about remembering the force of past humiliations that must be avenged. She will interact with the world with a greater sense of accomplishment and self-confidence, and — most importantly — humility, which are good attributes for the American secretary of state to have, in the view of the rest of the world. Throwing and hitting a baseball wipe away both arrogance and violence in those who have mastered these tasks, and they keep the art of deception harmlessly contained within the minds of managers and the repertoire of pitchers, within the boundaries of serene, green baseball fields.

Throw hard, Madeleine, and throw well.

LETTERS

The cart before the horse

To the Editor:

PALESTINIANS, AND indeed the Arab World, waited with bated breath in hopeful expectation of a new U.S. initiative conveyed by Yasser Arafat by Dennis Ross on his last visit to the area designed to salvage the faltering Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations.

However, the golden egg laid by the president's messenger was, believe it or not, that Mr. Arafat should halt the street violence which erupted upon the start of construction of a new Israeli settlement in occupied East Jerusalem before peace negotiations can be resumed.

Incidentally this message is an accurate repetition of what Mr. Netanyahu has been proclaiming to the world ever since he ordered the commencement of construction of the new settlement, implying, of course, that Mr. Arafat instigated the riots.

President Clinton must surely be aware of the fact that his message to Mr. Arafat to halt the street violence, without addressing the root cause of the violence, is putting the cart before horse. The president also surely appreciates that his message cannot possibly be implemented by Mr. Arafat. Any attempt by Yasser Arafat to do so would, in all probability, bring about the demise of the Palestinian National Authority, and with it the Oslo agreement, and the emergence of Hamas as the only credible leader of the Palestinians.

Mr. Netanyahu's performance since taking office seems to confirm the growing belief in the Arab World that he favours bringing about this dreadful scenario which would provide him with the justification he needs for using Israel's military might to create his "Greater Israel" on occupied Arab land.

George Kavar,
Amman.

Of peace and terrorism

To the Editor:

WITH BOMBS going off and Israelis dying in Tel Aviv, the world, especially the West, will once again claim that Palestinians are a violent people, breaking the peace accords. Westerners are unable to see the true situation of the Middle East as they sit snug in their homes and gladly take what their media spoon-feeds them.

One only wonders when the world will open its eyes to reason. It is plain who the violent people are. It is plain who does not want peace, and it is not the Palestinians. Israeli "hawks" are slaughtering the "dove" of peace. Their stubbornness to halt further Jewish settlements in Palestinian areas will be the catalyst that brings about more fighting.

The Israelis took Palestine by force and they forced many to leave at the point of a gun. They have killed and tortured many. They still do. While the Israelis cry to the world about their innocent and young victims, how can the world so easily forget all the women and children killed by Israelis? One recent example is that of a couple of months ago when an Israeli settler stomped in the head of an eight-year-old Palestinian boy. How can the world forget what happened at Deir Yassin and Sabra and Shaila?

So who are the real terrorists? Israel is a military state, where things are controlled with an iron fist. The Israeli men and women serve a compulsory term in the military. These trained soldiers continue service in reserves or

remain on call. Then, there are the Jewish settlers who peddle machine guns down the streets as casually as one would carry a newspaper.

They claim it is for safety. Yet they do not have an equally equipped opponent. The Palestinians do not have tanks, machine guns, planes.

It should be plain who is the aggressor and who is the oppressed. This is not a fair fight. Then, the aggressors continue bombing Lebanon whenever they can. They say they want peace, yet they keep on bombing. They keep on fighting. They keep on occupying.

There is obviously no real desire for peace. How can there be when there exist so many lies and so much violence? Why is there a United Nation when it does not help the people?

We see the U.S. going against other countries and vetoing U.N. resolutions calling on Israel to halt settlement construction. The U.S. has the only true voice in the U.N. When will we learn to tell the difference between a lie and a truth?

The hatred cannot vanish overnight. Signing pieces of paper does not necessarily change nations. Besides, we have seen Benjamin Netanyahu, and we have learned that the only change he wants is to become more militant and more stubborn. He has his Zionist goal, and the Palestinians are in the way of his dream. So are the Jordanians. The Zionist dream cannot be fed. It is too hungry and it will continue to grow like a fatal disease. Meantime, lies will be told to keep people's attention off Zionism's ever-growing appetite.

If the world does not wake up to the reality, the whole Middle East will be in trouble.

Lena Winfrey Sayyed,
Amman.

Acting for results

To the Editor:

THE SAD experience of Jo Molloy, as recounted in the letter "Appalling cruelty" (Jordan Times, March 29, 1997), is, unfortunately, not an isolated report. The practice by the municipality of shooting stray dogs in this uncivilised manner is all too frequent. Some readers may recollect a similar recent report on the local Internet, by one of our citizens, that was just as horrifying.

Apart from the obvious dangers of shooting in built-up areas, does not the municipality wonder what effect these actions might have on passing children witnessing the gory details of incompetent "snipers" cornering helplessly frightened creatures of God and then leaving them to die painfully? Is this how we would teach children compassion and respect for nature and our environment?

Furthermore, in this day and age, has not our municipality understood that there are more professional methods to round up homeless strays for disposal in a decent manner, should that be deemed necessary?

We all know there is no lack of sentiment and feeling in our society. Nevertheless I believe that we, as citizens, have much to answer for, because, as usual, we tend to find relief in verbally complaining to one another, without taking the trouble and logical initiative of politely but firmly addressing our concerns directly to the relevant authorities, in this case, the municipality, and following up. Recurring complaints can serve as a catalyst for action, and approached positively, it is surprising what results can accrue.

Margaret Ledger,
Amman.

U.S. breaks diplomatic ties with Israel

By Dr. Al Clare Brandabur
 Special to the Jordan Times

IN A stunning move which took the entire world by surprise, the Clinton administration today recalled its ambassador from Tel Aviv, froze all financial aid and military cooperation with Israel and demanded an emergency meeting of the Security Council to punish the Jewish state for continued failure to implement dozens of U.N. resolutions. Reached for comment on his tour of Africa, a grateful Kofi Annan was given smelling salts by his aids after passing out at the news.

Speculation was rife among political analysts as to what triggered this long-overdue move after years of passive U.S. acceptance of Israeli intransigence and defiance of world opinion. "It was a whiff of truth serum accidentally administered by an anaesthesiologist during President Bill Clinton's recent surgery to repair a ripped tendon," reported a White House insider on condition of anonymity. "During the operation the surgeon clumsily displaced the brain implant designed to guarantee automatic knee jerk approval of all Israeli policies," said the source. "For years, these robotic control devices have been inserted by Mossad handlers as a routine part of inauguration ceremonies for U.S. presidents."

However, a more highly placed source in the office of Madeleine Albright said the radical about-face in U.S. policy originated with the new secretary of state who was observed having a temper tantrum at Netanyahu's failure to yield to quiet diplomacy during Dennis Ross' recent visit. "That takes the solitary biscuit," she allegedly shouted. "What makes that little weenie think he can get

away with making us look like patsies?" Mrs. Albright is a subscriber to the publications of the Palestine Human Rights Information Centre, recently threatened with closure by Netanyahu, and it was the detailed accounts of land confiscation, assassinations, house demolition and torture of Palestinians by Israel which infuriated her. "This makes us look like retrograde imperialist bullies," she confided to President Clinton in a midnight telephone call.

Still others claimed the initiative came from Netanyahu himself. "Hundreds of young Israelis are leaving the country in disgust," reported a reliable source in the Israeli Knesset. "U.S. aid is not for the best interest of Israel, since it has made us a pariah in the Middle East." This about-face was attributed by Leis Toussef, BBC correspondent, to the capture of a white-robed figure on the Mount of Olives, arrested while weeping over Jerusalem on Good Friday. Interviewed before being put in an Israeli army barbed wire cage where tourists are charged admission to view him, the white-robed figure was quoted as saying "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, if thou hadst known and in this thy day the things that are for the peace. But now they are hidden from thine eyes. If you do not change they ways, thine enemies will compass thee about and straiten thee on every side, and there shall not be left of thee a stone upon a stone." So struck was Mr. Netanyahu by these words that he reportedly phoned President Clinton and urged him to sever all ties. Mr. Clinton could not be reached for comment.

Does the above sound like an April fools' joke? It is unfortunately — The writer.

Arabs unite over freezing ties with Israel

(Continued from page 1)

with Israel but that we don't go back to this mode of 'ganging up' on Israel and making these absurd ideas that the boycott will be reinstated," Mr. Netanyahu told Israeli Radio's English news.

"Israel has known periods of Israel-bashing more than once and we've been able to overcome it," he said.

Farouk Kaddoumi, the hardline head of the Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) political (foreign affairs) department, said the Israeli premier was trying to wipe out Palestinians.

"Netanyahu should go to hell. I've said it several times. He is a hardliner. He thinks we (Palestinians) are Red Indians. I respect Red Indians. He comes from Brooklyn, from the United States. He thinks he can annihilate the Palestinians. Netanyahu is like Hitler."

The decision to halt steps towards normalisation with Israel was hailed as a victory by Syria and Lebanon, which have long urged other Arab states such as Oman, Qatar, Morocco and Tunisia not to rush towards setting up ties with the Jewish state.

"From the beginning of the peace process we asked of our brotherly Arab countries not to rush into taking decisions that would precede the normal development of the peace process," Lebanese Foreign Minister Faris Bouez said.

"We must choose — either the peace process as agreed upon in Madrid and Israel must express a clear intention

that it will abide by stopping its settlement policy and abide by the principle of land for peace, or that Israel does not want this process. In this case Arab countries cannot be committed to something Israel has destroyed," he added.

Omani Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Youssef Ben Alawi Ben Abdullah, whose country froze relations with Israel last week, blamed Israel for the Arab resolution.

"The prime minister of Israel has closed the door to normalisation. Everyone is keen on keeping the track of peace going on. It is for the Israeli government to decide whether they want normalisation with Arabs or not," Mr. Alawi said.

"If they want normalisation with other Arabs they should normalise relations with Palestinians as well," he said.

Analysts saw the decision to freeze relations with Israel as aimed at encouraging the Israeli public to bring Mr. Netanyahu back to the peace process.

"We will begin to exert some influence, or pressure, on Israeli public opinion because public opinion in Israel will say, 'Look, Netanyahu, what you have done,'" Mr. Sharaa told Monday.

Mr. Sharaa's remarks were echoed by Mr. Kaddoumi.

"This is a collective action by all Arabs aimed to give a message to the Israelis that because of their provocative procedures, they have stopped the process of peace and destroyed the whole thing," Mr. Kaddoumi said. Mr. Sharaa said the minis-

ters' action implements the decision made by Arab leaders at a summit in Cairo last June and does not need to go back to them for review.

The summit warned that if Israel backed away from pledges, it would "compel all Arab states to reconsider steps taken in the context of the peace process."

Mr. Kaddoumi said he expected any trade offices opened by the Arabs or Israel to be closed.

Mr. Ben Alawi told reporters Monday that his country would "close relations" with Israel. He did not give a date, saying it would happen "when necessary."

He added: "It is now up to the Israelis to decide whether they need normalisation with the Arabs or they establish their own, brazen policy."

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, in an interview Monday on Egypt's Nile Television, said the resolution would help the Palestinian cause.

"I am not asking for the moon, I am asking for the honest implementation of what has been agreed upon," Mr. Arafat said.

He repeated that Mr. Netanyahu's predecessor, the late Yitzhak Rabin, had pledged there would be no new Jewish settlements until Israel and the Palestinians concluded their final peace agreement.

Mr. Arafat also said he had assurances from then-U.S. Secretary of State James Baker that there would be "no demographic changes" in Jerusalem during the negotiations.

PNA shuns U.S. call for security ties with Israel

(Continued from page 1)

ence that he deplored the freezing of intelligence links between the two sides. But he added that the Israeli military was pleased with the security cooperation it has with the Palestinian police.

"There are daily meetings between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian police officials, which are continuing even with the current crisis," Col. Elad said.

He said the Israeli military had been concerned that there would be violent confrontations in Nabulus on Sunday. "Sunday morning, the Palestinian governor of Nabulus, Mahmud Al Alul, met General Gaby Ofir, commander of the Israeli troops in the West Bank, and we saw the results on the ground in spite of the presence of 2,000 to 3,000 Hamas sympathisers."

Hamas (Islamic Resistance movement) was behind the suicide bombing

of March 21.

Israel had deployed reinforcements and tanks on the outskirts of Nabulus, which it did not use, while the Palestinian police employed force to prevent several hundred demonstrators from approaching Israeli positions in the city.

Col. Elad added that most joint Israeli-Palestinian patrols were continuing despite tensions in the West Bank. But official peace talks remained frozen, called off after Israel began building a settlement for 30,000 Jews on the hilltop of Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem on March 18.

The Palestinians want to make the Eastern section of the Holy City the capital of a future state, while Israel maintains that it is part of its undivided capital.

After the cafe bombing, Israel demanded the PNA to clamp down on militant Islamic groups as a condition for reopening the talks.

"They (Israel) decided what kind of coordination they want when they began building on Jabal Abu Ghneim," Col. Rajoub said.

When asked if Palestinian security would follow Israeli army requests to arrest militants if asked to do so, Col. Rajoub said: "We are not a unit in the Israeli army and we do our own work."

"That is not the language we use to relate to each other," the security chief added.

Col. Rajoub rejected as "lies" accusations by Israeli army intelligence heads who accused him of helping to organise Land Day and other demonstrations against Israel.

A member of the Israeli parliament, Yossi Beilin of the opposition Labour Party, told the radio the lack of coordination between the intelligence forces meant more attacks could be carried out.

Arab League puts off setting up bodies

(Continued from page 1)

in Turkey. However, the Euphrates flows through Syria and then Iraq while the Tigris also passes through Iraq.

Damascus and Baghdad accuse Turkey of using too much of the water without

taking their needs into account with the building of the dams on Turkish territory.

The council also reiterated its support for the United Arab Emirates in its territorial dispute with Iran over the Gulf islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu

Musa.

It called on "the Iranian government to end the occupation of the three UAE islands and to turn to peaceful means to sort out the issue in accordance with international law."

16 countries relaunch talks on 'Asian OSCE'

ALMATY (AFP) — Officials from 16 Asian and Middle Eastern countries gathered in the Kazakh capital Monday for a week of talks on establishing a body which would boost security across the region much as the OSCE does in Europe.

Diplomats and officials were due to agree a joint declaration which would serve as a charter for an embryonic Asian security body, the conference on collaboration and confi-

dence measures in Asia.

The joint declaration is expected to define the principles to which signatories must adhere, but unlike the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the question of human rights will not be included in the charter, one Kazakh official said.

"The CCCMA is attracting more and more states and organisations concerned with the construction of a security system in Asia," said Kazakh For-

eign Minister Kas-simzhomart Tokayev.

Other than Kazakhstan, host and driving force behind Monday's meeting, the meeting also drew delegations from

Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, the Palestinian Authority, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan.

Russia said to propose alternative to missile sale to Iran

(Continued from page 1)

through the purchase of the Russian know-how to complete their own Zilzel-3 missile with a range of between 1,000 and 1,500 kilometres, according to Mr. Steinberg.

With the purchase, Iran could begin testing the Zilzel-3 in 1998, Mr. Steinberg added.

Russian scientists currently teach missile technology in three Iranian

universities, experts told Ha'aretz.

Iran has in the past hosted missile experts from China and North Korea to learn about the necessary components to produce the weapons.

The United States has demanded that Russia not complete the deal with Iran.

The insistence came after Israeli intelligence experts told their U.S. counterparts about the information they had on the deal, the news-

paper reported.

The late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin rejected a similar proposal by North Korea not to sell weapons to Iran in exchange for financial compensation.

Rabin insisted that Israel would not risk making a habit of such deals with countries. The Yeltsin proposal puts Israel in a dilemma in trying to avoid such agreements, according to the daily.

Randa Habib's corner

Arabdisney planned for Jordan

WHENEVER SOMEBODY mentions Disney World, I feel the magic. I must admit that while I always claimed that I wanted to take my children to visit Disney World, Disneyland, in the U.S. or Eurodisney in France, I was in fact very selfishly thinking of myself.

So, you can imagine the state of euphoria I am in today, having found out that Prince Al Walid of Saudi Arabia, who recently bought most of Eurodisney, has plans to finance the opening of an Arabdisney in Jordan.

The project is still kept under wraps, but I happen to have heard about it from one of several Jordanian businessmen who have been approached to help set the ground for the Arabdisney.

Following a three-month survey in the areas neighbouring the capital, the investors finally made up their mind as to the future location of Arabdisney.

The Saudi tycoon, who visited Jordan a few months ago, has chosen to remain discreet about his regional project, at a time when he sounded out the prospects of investing in all sorts of potential projects and joint ventures in Jordan.

The flagship Disney World has initially cast doubts with regard to the feasibility of such a huge project in a seemingly small market, bearing in mind that Eurodisney did not prove to be a profitable project.

Prince Al Walid, however, has pledged to make this project a success by contributing all the needed funds which, I am told, will amount to \$3 billion.

In short, a perfect replica of Disney World will be erected on a plain area of 3,000 dunums, some 40 kilometres from Amman.

The construction of this huge project is expected to take more than two years, and the official opening has been set for the year 2000.

Prince Al Walid was quoted as saying that he has secured the presence of the famous singer Michael Jackson. It is well known that Prince Al Walid's son is a big fan of the controversial pop star.

In a bid to give the huge project a regional dimension, the Saudi magnate and partners plan to stage wide-scale promotion campaigns in the Arab World.

Jordan has pledged to build a state-of-the-art, high-speed bullet train to connect major neighbouring cities, like Beirut, Damascus, Baghdad and Jeddah to Amman. The forty-eight-hour average trip will allow visitors to see this fairy tale city and spend a night at the luxurious "Al Salam" hotel that will be erected in its vicinity.

Jordan Times

Tel. 699634-684311

OBITUARY

The director general and the staff of
The Italian Condotti and Lavori Consortium
 announce with deep sorrow the death of
Abdullah Hussein Odeh Njadat

who passed away in an accident.

They all express their condolences to the bereaved family

and the Njadat tribe.

May God bless his soul

Bank of Israel governor sees lower growth in '97

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli economic growth this year will be less than the 4.0 per cent budget forecast, but the government should not use the slowdown as an excuse to loosen its spending constraint, Bank of Israel Governor Jacob Frenkel warned Monday.

His remarks followed hints by treasury officials that the slowing economy may require the government to exceed its target budget deficit of 2.8 per cent of gross domestic product.

"They say when the economy is slowing it's not the time to keep to budget targets," Dr. Frenkel told a news conference to present the central bank's annual report. "I reject this completely. No budgetary restraint ever damages the economy."

He said gross domestic product would grow less than the officially projected 4.0 per cent, which would mark a significant decline from 4.4 per cent in 1996 and 7.1 per cent in 1995.

"It will be below the four

per cent that was put into the budget, but it is too early to come up with a precise estimate," he added.

Finance Minister Dan Meridor is due to review spending after the first quarter, which ended Monday.

"I think at the present stage it would be a mistake to decide policies intentionally to miss targets," Dr. Frenkel said.

Dr. Frenkel said containing the budget was a key element "to make sure this slowdown remains shallow and brief."

He rejected calls for an administrative devaluation of the Israeli currency, but added that he saw signs that the shekel was beginning a period of a real depreciation.

"According to what research shows, it appears we are beginning a process of a real depreciation," Dr. Frenkel said, citing reduced demand by Israelis for foreign currency loans.

"This of course will depend on implementing policies themselves... It is critically important to keep

on the matter of the budget deficit, to the deficit reduction law and to the inflation target that the government set," he said.

Demand for foreign currency loans by Israelis taking advantage of lower interest rates overseas had been a key factor in maintaining the shekel's strength in recent years. But the pace of borrowing slowed during 1996.

More recently, a wave of foreign investment has also buttressed the Israeli currency.

Dr. Frenkel said the government should move forward with structural changes, especially in ending foreign currency controls.

"I would recommend that the government adapt as a strategic goal... to make the Israeli shekel fully convertible in world currency markets," he said.

He noted that with Israeli foreign currency reserves at record levels of nearly \$14 billion, the government had the leeway to liberalise foreign exchange rules.

UAE remains heavily reliant on Asian labour

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) remains heavily reliant on Asian labour despite the introduction of entry curbs and calls for cutting the number of expatriate workers, officials said Monday.

Sheikh Taleb Al Qassimi, chief of the Ras Al Khaimah police, said Arab labour was more secure than Asians given common traditions and languages.

"But Arab labour is costly and we cannot impose it on the private sector, which aims to make profits," he told Al-Shuruf magazine. "So long as the Asian workers meet the requirements of the private sector, we cannot persuade this sector to replace Asians with Arabs."

Independent estimates show around 70 per cent of the UAE's 800,000-strong workforce are from Asian countries, mainly India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Philippines.

Nearly 200,000 illegal aliens from those countries and Iran were deported last year after they were given a four-month amnesty.

But many of them have returned through legal means and were employed by the private sector, according to UAE officials.

"We have always said excessive reliance on non-Arab foreigners poses security threats to the country. There should be measures to restrict their entry and encourage national companies to give priority to natives and other Arab citizens," said a UAE official, who requested anonymity.

But businessmen seeking to offset a slowdown in the economy, following the oil boom 15 years ago, have been reluctant to replace their cheap Asian labour.

The labour and social affairs ministry has repeatedly called on local companies to recruit nationals to tackle the burgeoning problem of unemployment caused by the graduation of a large number of students from universities and training institutes.

"We are businessmen and emotion has no room in our work. How can we employ someone from here when he demands three times the salary of an Asian worker although the latter is more experienced," a UAE company manager said.

Most South Asian expatriates in the UAE work in the construction sector, restaurants, shops and other small businesses as well as domestic helpers.

Indians and Pakistanis alone account for nearly 35 per cent of the UAE's total population of 2.3 million. Expatriates from Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and the

Philippines are estimated at around 300,000.

Foreigners began streaming into the UAE and other Gulf states in early 1970s when oil discoveries brought immense wealth to the arid desert region.

Regional states embarking on one of the biggest construction drives in modern history to build their infrastructure had to hire foreign workers as they lacked skilled labour and most of their women were not allowed to work.

But they all have launched campaigns to replace foreigners with native labour after hundreds of thousands of stu-

dents graduated and more women were permitted to take up jobs in a departure from previous conservative policies.

"The demographic structure in the UAE has become an inevitable evil. But there is no worry so long as it remained under control," Sheikh Taleb said.

"Concerning the foreign labour, we cannot dispose of all of them... Every year we are carrying out more projects and the population is growing. We need an expansion in construction and services, and consequently, more workers," he emphasised.

Booming economy puts Malaysia at head of Asia's hi-tech race

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — With its new gleaming twin Petronas towers, the Malaysian capital appears as a shining example of a booming Asia, and proof that Malaysia is a contender in the hi-tech race.

Kuala Lumpur — the "muddy estuary" in Malay — has long since forgotten its roots a century ago when it was no more than a small mining village.

Today, it is a high-technology city, with the world's two tallest towers looking skyward among a mass of steel and glass, and the only memory of the past are its scattered Moorish and Victorian-style buildings.

Pragmatic policy under Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's government has given the Malaysian economy a growth rate exceeding eight per cent annually over the past nine years, one of the highest in the world.

With per capita gross domestic product (GDP)

reaching \$4,400 a year, the country has a healthy consumer market and is second among Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) members, with regional finance capital Singapore in the lead.

Political stability and an abundance of natural resources and skilled labour among the country's 22 million people — 50 per cent of the workforce speak English — is enough to attract a large number of foreign investors.

"It's a country that makes its mark by the 'modernity' of its infrastructure," said economic consultant Jean-Claude Bernard.

Malaysia is building an ultra-modern airport to rival neighbouring Singapore's Changi Airport and hopefully attract a larger market share to its aviation sector.

The economy has been privatised to a large extent, with more than 100,000 public sector employees switching to the private sector over the past

10 years, under careful planning and a balanced budget.

A focus on developing exports, foreign investment and technology transfers have benefited Malaysia in its new drive to become the region's leading technology hub.

"Here, people make decisions with a strong faith in the future," said Charles Hervé, French auto maker Citroën's director for Malaysia. "People thought they had found a treasure island but do not know what tomorrow will bring."

There are some signs of weakness: "The economy" is not likely to offer any immediate return on investment, there is a growing labour shortage coupled by demands for higher pay, and transportation infrastructure is reaching a saturation level.

Despite these setbacks, Malaysia is still one of the most attractive countries among ASEAN colleagues Brunei, Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates Prices as at 31/03/97 18:53									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.6645	0.6079	1.4380	123.53	1.3825	1667.25	1.8757	6.6155
GB Sterling	1.6450	2.7415	-	2.3449	202.44	2.2742	2740.96	3.0637	9.2319
JP Yen	0.0081	1.2468	0.4917	1.1637	-	1.1188	13.49	151.81	4.5412
IT Lira	0.0006	0.9976	0.3644	0.8882	1352.08	0.8287	-	11.24	3.3637
FR Franc	0.1781	0.2965	0.1083	0.2482	21.98	0.2482	33.57	33.3700	-

Energy		
Oils	Last	Previous
Brent	18.80	18.55
Bony	18.80	18.55
UL Gas	205.00	205.00

Mid-East Currencies					
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2688	0.4440	0.16209	0.33369	32.9489
KW Dinar	3.2992	6.49451	2.00982	4.74834	467.664
CY Pound	1.9994	3.331	1.2165	2.8777	247.31

Metal Prices		
Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	348.8	349.1
Platinum (oz's)	366.5	367.5
CU (3 Months)	2378	2383
Lead (3 Months)	684	687

Currency Deposit Rates (Bld)						
Period	1-3	3-6	6-9	9-12	1-12	1-12
Chy	Month	Months	Months	Months	Year	Year
USD	5.78	5.88	5.87	6.06	6.34	
JPY	0.37	0.37	0.50	0.43	0.50	
YRF	3.23	3.25	3.32	3.38	3.45	
ITL	7.28	7.25	7.25	7.12	7.12	

Main Equity Indices						
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low
New York	DOW JONES	6625.02	-115.57	-1.71	6739.83	6625.02
London	FT-SE 100	4312.9	11.4	0.27	4331.4	4301.5
Paris	CAC 40	2896.58	7.95	0.3	2897.54	2847.58

Energy		
Commodity	Last	Deliver
Coffee (c/lb)	196.5	Spot
Sugar (c/lb)	309	Spot
Soya (c/lb)	23.17	Spot
Barley (c/lb)	0	Spot

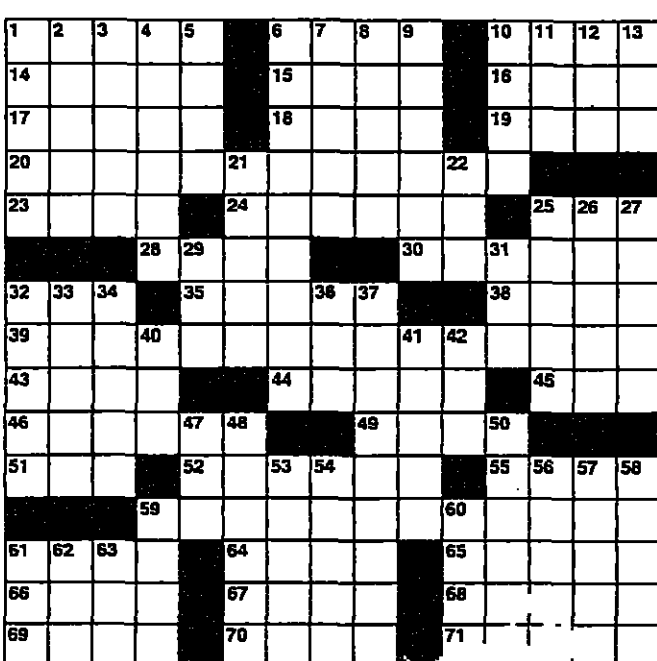
JOD Cross Rates		
Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
DE Mark	0.4213	0.4234
FR Franc	0.1251	0.1257
NL Guilder	0.3746	0.3765

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

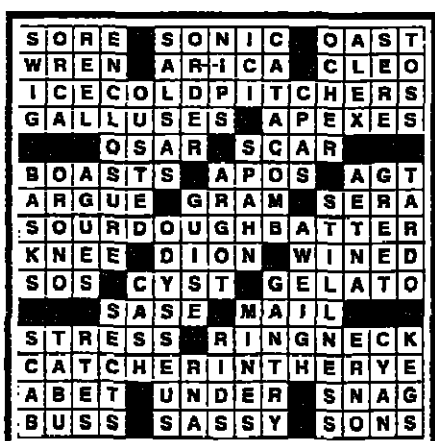
- 1 Telegraph inventor
- 6 Not as much
- 10 Comet component
- 14 Depravities
- 15 Earthenware pot
- 16 British composer
- 17 Duck in "Peter and the Wolf"
- 18 — cheese
- 19 Not the real McCoy
- 20 Webber "star"
- 23 Eat
- 24 Marine mollusk
- 25 Diamond object
- 28 Actress Spelling
- 30 Dwell
- 32 Mayday!
- 35 Flemish painter
- 38 Type of school
- 39 1974 hit by Harry Chapin
- 43 Indian
- 44 Burns the surface
- 45 Visualize
- 46 Fix
- 49 Road hazards
- 51 Sounds of hesitation
- 52 Behaves
- 55 Danson and Koppel
- 59 1977 hit by Al Stewart
- 61 Actress Freeman
- 64 Lodz native
- 65 "Kate and —" (song)
- 66 Nuncupative
- 67 Concert pianist
- 68 Angry look
- 69 Fountain
- 70 Carry on
- 71 Woodland deity



by Kenneth Witte

- #### DOWN
- 1 Atomic particle
 - 2 Convex molding
 - 3 Cheese covers
 - 4 Minor
 - 5 Jacob's sibling
 - 6 PAC members

- 7 Psychologist
- 8 Havelock
- 9 Flying object?
- 10 U.S. president
- 11 Coach
- 12 Sign
- 13 Actress Remick
- 14 Doll
- 22 "Chances —" (song)
- 25 Hitchcock's "The —"
- 26 Fred's sister
- 27 Plains abode
- 29 Japanese sash
- 31 Mineral spring
- 32 Earn points
- 33 Western
- 34 Brings to an end
- 36 Ernesto
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JORDAN TIMES
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Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, APRIL 1, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) If you spend any money this morning, do so carefully so that you will have extra funds. Make sure your car is in good running order before you drive anywhere tonight, thereby eliminating any chance of being stuck.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Do whatever is necessary to improve your health today, thereby not having to take any time off. Some reliable friends can help you greatly later this evening in handling some practical affairs successfully. **GEMINI:** (May 21 to June 21) Help out a friend today who is having a hard time, however, keep anything which transpires confidential. Be kind and considerate to your mate later this evening by doing something for him or her which will be appreciated.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Avoid an acquaintance who is annoying this morning, or your mood will be spoiled and this will make you feel bad. Smile more later this evening and gain your aims easily with the assistance of knowledgeable people.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) If you get involved in any civic or credit matters today, be sure to keep what about you or you will lose an important opportunity. Be appreciative of some help from a superior and let him or her know you are grateful.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Don't be taken in by a flashy new car today, this person has your worst interests in mind and this won't be productive. Arrange any schedule for the days ahead tonight, thereby keeping a clear mind.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Avoid a fellow business acquaintance today who may feel cheated in some manner, and later all will be cleared up nicely. Don't be harsh with your mate or you could find yourself in quite a difficulty.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Get an early start this morning and arrange a time to have a discussion with a fellow associate. Decide which projects later this evening require your attention for the days ahead and devise a plan of action.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Try to make your surroundings at career activities more pleasant and efficient today with the assistance of a fellow associate. Enjoy the home life tonight and relax with your loved ones for the days ahead.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) This morning is a good time today to plan entertainment for the days ahead, however, cut down on expenses later this evening. Show your mate how devoted you are to him or her by doing something special which is not anticipated.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Plan how to make your home more attractive this morning so that your loved ones will feel comfortable. Be sure to stay within your budget while shopping later this evening, so that you won't be short of funds.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Be sure you are on time today for any early appointments so you can gain greater benefits from your business endeavours. Drive very carefully while on the highway later this evening, thereby eliminating any difficulties.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

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Villeneuve wins Brazilian Grand Prix

SAO PAULO, Brazil (R) — World championship favourite Jacques Villeneuve of Canada rubbed out the disappointment of his early exit from the season-opening Australian Grand Prix when he cruised to victory in the re-started Brazilian race at Interlagos on Sunday.

Villeneuve, driving a Williams, easily won despite nearly missing the race altogether after a disastrous start which saw him career off the track.

Four other cars followed Villeneuve, forcing officials to re-start the race.

The second time around the Canadian took the lead at the end of the first lap of the race and, apart from three laps during the pit stops, stayed there all the way to the chequered flag.

His solid victory lifted him to the top of the drivers' championship, standing with 10 points alongside Briton David Coulthard who won the Melbourne race for McLaren.

Villeneuve, 25, came home 4.1 seconds ahead of Austrian Gerhard Berger in a Benetton. Frenchman Olivier Panis grabbed third place and a first podium finish for the new Prost team and their new Japanese tyre suppliers Bridgestone.

It was Villeneuve's fifth victory in his 18th Grand Prix and leaves him only one win short of his legendary father Gilles's total of six wins.

Mika Hakinen of Finland, in a McLaren, came home fourth. Michael Schumacher of Germany



Canadian Jacques Villeneuve sprays champagne after winning the Sao Paulo Grand Prix. Austrian Gerhard Berger was second and Frenchman Olivier Panis was third (Reuters photo)

driving a Ferrari was fifth and Frenchman Jean Alesi, in a Benetton, finished sixth.

Villeneuve, however, was fortunate to win the race as he had survived a scare earlier when he went off in a multiple collision at the first corner following the first start.

The race was red-flagged to a halt and erased from the record — saving Villeneuve the embarrassment of first corner exits at the two opening races of the year.

The Canadian appeared to be forced wide by Schumacher as they went into the opening bend. He had started from pole position

but was unable to take advantage and careered wide across the gravel track through the downhill Senna curve where he was followed by four other cars.

When the race re-started, Villeneuve again was unable to take the lead from pole position. Twice world champion Schumacher took the initiative in his Ferrari until the end of the opening lap when the Canadian passed him under braking.

From then on, Villeneuve remained in command and only conceded the lead for three laps following his second pit stop before easing his way to the finish.

Afterwards he said: "It is a

great feeling to win after all that happened to me in Melbourne and the trouble here at the first start. I was lucky but the car was very strong today, really good on the straights and it is good to win."

Villeneuve returned to the track after his early first corner departure and his car was relatively undamaged.

For him, it was a lucky day but he rode his good fortune to claim a victory that gives him and the Williams team a great chance of pressing home their advantage at the Argentine Grand Prix in two weeks' time.

Kingdom's national team continues training for World Cup qualifiers

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Kingdom's national soccer team has started the final stage of preparations for the Asian World Cup qualifiers which kick off in Manama, Bahrain April 8.

The team is just back from a four-day training camp in Aqaba where the players underwent an intense training schedule.

Players will now resume their twice-a-day final practice sessions at Al Salt stadium because of the closure of Amman International stadium for maintenance.

Coach Mohammad Awad said the camp in Aqaba had been successful and further boosted the players physical fitness.

He said the team would keep up training until April 4 when they leave for Manama four days prior to the start of the Group 3 qualifiers against Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The coach said officials had previously scheduled two games against Qatar just prior to the qualifiers so that players would adapt to the hot and humid Gulf weather. However, the Qatari federation has declined because of their local league schedule.

Awad said he believed Group 3 teams were very close and that the Kingdom's team had a good chance at the qualifiers.

The UAE team's latest result was 4-1 loss to Norway. Their other results were a 1-1 draw with Syria and a 2-1 win over Lebanon. The Bahraini team recently lost 3-1 to Kuwait.

Jordan's record in eight friendly internationals included three defeats, three goalless draws and two wins, both over Oman.

At the start of their training camps abroad the Jordanian team had two matches against Lebanon losing 1-0 in Beirut and drawing 0-0 in Amman.

Against the Iraqi team Jordan twice lost 1-0 in Baghdad while both matches against Syria ended in goalless draws.

The Kingdom's only wins were 2-0 and 4-1 in Muscat on the third leg of the team's training camps abroad.

Officials expressed uncertainty about the teams offensive and scoring abilities especially that the team seems to rely on individual efforts of top scorers, specifically Jiryes Tadros, who scored the four goals in the 4-1 win.

Thirty-six Asian countries will contest the first round World Cup qualifiers and have been divided into ten groups. Some groups have already begun their qualifiers.

Group 1: Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Bangladesh and Taiwan.

Group 2: Iran, Syria, Maldives, Kyrgyzstan.
Group 3: United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Bahrain.
Group 4: Japan, Oman, Nepal, Macao.
Group 5: Uzbekistan, Indonesia, Yemen, Cambodia.
Group 6: South Korea, Thailand, Hong Kong.
Group 7: Kuwait, Lebanon, Singapore.
Group 8: China, Turkmenistan, Vietnam, Tajikistan.
Group 9: Iraq, Pakistan, Kazakhstan.
Group 10: Qatar, India, Sri Lanka, Philippines.

The 10 groups winners will qualify for the second round where the teams will be divided into two groups. The first two from each group will then contest the Asian finals.

The first three qualify directly for the 1998 World Cup in France while the winner of a play-off between the fourth team and the Oceania Zone winner will also qualify.

Jordan Soccer Federation (JSF) President HRH Prince Abdullah Ben Ali Hussein will be attending the second leg of the qualifiers start April 19 in Sharjah.

The 31-member delegation will be headed by JSF deputy chairman Saleh Irsheidat and Secretary-General Hisham Asfour in addition to referee Dahham Egeidat, team manager Abullatif Abdul Majid, coaches Mohammad Awad and Adnan Masud, goalkeepers coach Basem Tayyem, Dr. Samir Sara, and physiotherapist Hussein Atallah.

Mr. Asfour said the team's training camps and preparations cost the JSF over JD 60,000.

The Kingdom's initial lineup includes Mu'taz Rishheh, Youssef Ammouri, Mohammad Mahadin, Amjad Taher, Hussein Shanaineh, Faisal Ibrahim, Subhi Suleiman, Jamal Abu Abed, Adnan Awad, Nari Yada, Aref Hussein and Jiryes Tadros.

The team also includes Ahmad Abu Nasouh, Mohammad Abu Daoud, Mohammad Khaz'ali, Abdallah Abu Zame'h, Isam Mahmoud, Munir Abu Hantash, Bassam Al Khatib, Ahmad Khalil, Ja'far Hammad, Hassouneh Sheikh.

TV coverage of Group 3 matches

First leg in Bahrain			
Jordan — UAE	April 8	5:15 p.m.	
Bahrain — UAE	April 11	5:15 p.m.	
Bahrain — Jordan	April 14	5:15 p.m.	
Second leg in Sharjah			
Bahrain — Jordan	April 19	5:00 p.m.	
UAE — Bahrain	April 22	5:00 p.m.	
UAE — Jordan	April 26	5:00 p.m.	

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Freiburg near relegation

BONN (AFP) — Although there are still nine Bundesliga matches still to play Freiburg appear resigned to going back to the second division. They lost Saturday's cellar battle against Hansa Rostock 3-1 and are 11 points adrift in their race to leave the relegation zone. "It's no secret that we will probably go down and then we plan to get promoted again straight away next season," a despondent coach Volker Finke said.

Southall sends warning

CARDIFF (AFP) — High-profile Wales keeper Neville Southall warned a complete revamping of the side was imperative if they wanted to progress on the international scene. Wales lost 2-1 to Belgium on Saturday to almost certainly end any chances of qualifying for France next year. Belgium are now firm favourites to finish second behind near-certain group seven winners Holland and bid for a place at France 98 via the world Cup play-offs.

Sinus sidelines Batty

LONDON (AFP) — David Batty is back in the sick bay and is in line for further treatment to a sinus problem which nearly wrecked his chances of playing in England's friendly win over Mexico on Saturday. Batty managed to show his usual tough, ball-winning attributes before being substituted after the break because of the problem. Batty first had the unusual complaint for a footballer during Newcastle's match against Wimbledon the previous weekend.

Ravanelli fit for cup final

LONDON (AFP) — Italian ace Fabrizio Ravanelli will rejoin Middle-borough on Thursday in their final preparation for Sunday's League Cup final against Leicester. Ravanelli, who has scored 26 goals this season, is confident he will be fit for Wembley, after extensive treatment on a hamstring injury in Italy.

McGrath misses Macedonia trip

DUBLIN (AFP) — Defender Paul McGrath was missing from the Republic of Ireland party which flew to Macedonia Monday after being ruled out of Wednesday's World Cup qualifying match with an Achilles tendon injury. The derby centre-half would have taken his record number of republic caps to 84 if he had played in the group eight qualifier in the former Yugoslav state. But the 37-year-old's absence is a blow to manager Mick McCarthy, who is also without duo Ray Houghton and Niall Quinn.

Cavs snap losing streak; Suns, Knicks beat Sonics and Magic

CLEVELAND (R) — Terrell Brandon, a late insertion into the starting lineup, scored 19 points as the Cleveland Cavaliers snapped a three-game losing streak with an 84-80 victory over the fading Dallas Mavericks on Sunday.

Brandon had not been scheduled to start because of a muscle strain in his back.

Tyrone Hill had 17 points and Chris Mills 15 for the Cavaliers, who moved one game ahead of the Washington Bullets for the eighth and final Eastern Conference playoff spot.

"It wasn't really much of a decision," said Brandon about the start. "If I can walk correctly, I've got to play."

In Detroit, Doug Overton, starting for the injured Allen Iverson, scored 12 of his season-high 19 points in the fourth quarter to lead the Philadelphia 76ers to a 96-92 victory over the slumping Detroit Pistons.

Overton helped the 76ers overcome an eight-point deficit in the final six minutes and win for the third time in their last four games.

"I'm not as quick as Allen, or as athletic," Overton said. "I think I'm quick, but when I back him up, I look slow. I change the tempo of the game."

Jerry Stackhouse scored 22 points for Philadelphia. Joe Dumars had 19 points for Detroit.

At Golden State, Kevin Garnett scored 33 points and combined with Tom Gugliotta to combine to shoot a blistering 72 per cent from the field as the Minnesota Timberwolves decked the Golden State Warriors, 113-

102. Garnett made 12-of-15 shots from the field and Gugliotta, who had 31 points, sank 13-of-17 for Minnesota, which moved within two games of .500.

Joe Smith scored 22 points and Chris Mullin 20 for Golden State.

At Indiana, Rik Smits scored eight of his season-high 40 points in overtime as the surging Indiana Pacers won their fourth straight game, 103-96 over the Los Angeles Clippers.

Smits, who also grabbed nine rebounds, scored eight of Indiana's 12 points in overtime. Reggie Miller chipped in 28 points.

"He's (Smits) practising better than at any time I've been here and his play is indicative of that," said Pacers coach Larry Brown. "He looks more athletic to me. I'm proud of him."

In Orlando, Patrick Ewing shook off an injury to score 11 of his 33 points in the pivotal third quarter as the New York Knicks ended a slump by cruising to a 101-86 victory over the Orlando Magic.

Chris Childs added 19 points for the Knicks, who took the lead for good in the second quarter and built the advantage to as many as 22 points before coasting to just their fourth win in nine games.

"I thought it was a total team effort," Ewing said. "Everybody did something. We played great defence, rebounded the ball, clogged up the lane. We just made everything tough for them."

Penny Hardaway scored 21 points and Rony Seikaly 17 for the Magic.

In Toronto, Damon Stoudamire had a career-



Toronto Raptors' centre Sharone Wright (C) shouts out in pain after being pulled down by Miami Heat's centre Alonzo Mourning (L), while Heat's forward Keith Askins chases down the loose ball during fourth quarter NBA action in Toronto. The Raptors beat the Heat 102-97 (Reuters photo)

high 35 points and 11 assists and the Toronto Raptors held the Miami Heat with-

ended a basket for nearly the final six minutes, rallying for a 102-97 victory that

ended a five-game losing streak. The Raptors erased a 10-

point fourth-quarter deficit in snapping Miami's eight-game winning streak. The Heat saw their Atlantic Division lead over the New York Knicks pared to 2-1/2 games with 11 remaining.

At Washington, Rod Strickland scored seven of his 21 points in the fourth quarter, including four in a decisive burst, as the Washington Bullets claimed a 94-87 triumph over the Dallas Mavericks.

Juwan Howard scored 20 points and pulled down eight rebounds and Chris Webber added 17 and 18 for Washington, which moved within a half-game of the Cleveland Cavaliers and the final Eastern Conference playoff berth.

"This is the first time I think the team has come together," Cheaney said.

In Denver, Laphonso Ellis scored 24 points and Kenny Smith sank a three-pointer with 3.1 seconds remaining as the Denver Nuggets ended a six-game losing streak with a 99-97 victory over the Milwaukee Bucks.

After Smith's basket gave the Nuggets a 98-97 lead, Milwaukee's Glenn Robinson lost control of the inbound pass. The Bucks then fouled Smith, who made one free throw for a 99-97 lead with five-tenths of a second left.

In Phoenix, Rex Chapman and Wesley Person combined to hit 11 three-pointers as the Phoenix Suns beat the Pacific Division-leading Seattle Supersonics, holding them off for a 107-106 victory.

Jason Kidd chipped in 19 points and a season-high 16 assists for Phoenix, which has won six consecutive games.

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Madrid retain 9-point lead; Bayern still ahead

PARIS (AFP) — Leaders Real Madrid on Sunday maintained their nine-point gap over Barcelona in the Spanish league with many clubs missing key players through World Cup duty.

In Germany Bayern Munich opened up a two point lead, beating 1-0, but are being pursued by a trio of clubs. Bayer Leverkusen, Stuttgart and Borussia Dortmund, who are chasing their third successive title.

In France league leaders Monaco had the weekend off owing to Cup quarter-finals but their second division conquerors Laval maintained their run beating Troyes 1-0 to earn a second semi-final appearance in four years, while they were joined by First Division Guingamp, Montpellier and Nice.

Real Madrid, who had requested a postponement of their late match at Tenerife because of suspensions, injuries, and Brazilian players itching to get away to play an international friendly, gained a creditable 1-1 draw at bogey team Tenerife — who had twice defeated them on the last day of the season depriving them of the championship.

Victor opened the scoring for Madrid in the 59th minute giving them hope of motoring 11 points clear after closest pursuers Barcelona had earlier drawn 1-1 at Valencia.

But Oliver Neuville equalised for Tenerife in the 67th minute to end Real's hopes of extending their advantage.

Barcelona, for whom Ronaldo equalised in the 70th minute to add to his two goals in the 4-0 midweek Spanish Cup victory at Second Division Las Palmas, were also without suspended Luis Enrique and centre-back Abela.

After the match, Ronaldo, who tops the goal scoring list with 24, was due to take an early plane out of Spain because of international duty.

Valencia also had players on international duty — Ariel Ortega was with Argentina, Goran Vlahovic was on Croatian duty and Valery Karpin was with the Russian squad.

Benis remained in third following their 0-0 draw at relegation-threatened Espanyol. But the Seville side, level on points with Barcelona, would have taken second spot in their own right had a shot from Luis Marquez in the dying seconds gone in instead of hitting the post.

Meanwhile Deportivo La Coruna drew 1-1 at Real Sociedad on Saturday evening to consolidate fourth place.

Alexander Zickler scored the third quickest goal in the Bundesliga's history to give Bayern Munich a 1-0 victory over Werder Bremen Saturday and help them establish a two-point lead at the top of the German First Division.



FC Barcelona's Brazilian star Ronaldo (R) is challenged for the ball by Valencia's defender Ivan Campo during their Spanish first division soccer match in Valencia Luis Casanova stadium. The match ended in a 1-1 draw (Reuters photo)

Zickler put the ball into the net after just 15 seconds in Munich's Olympic stadium, equalling the Mark of Moenchengladbach's Martin Dahlin against Dortmund a week ago.

Werder tightened up thereafter but never looked like ending the only unbeaten home record in the German top flight.

Bayern's Italian coach Giovanni Trapattoni was pleased with a workmanlike performance from his side.

"This was an important victory for us and on the basis of the first half we deserved it," he said. "If we'd settled down we might have scored more goals, but we suffered in the second half because we lost our flow in midfield."

"We were caught cold," admitted Werder coach Hans-Juergen Doerner.

Bayer Leverkusen kept up the pressure with a 2-0 win over Schalke that lifted them to second.

Leverkusen were slow starting but found their form in the second half when Ulf Kirsten rediscovered his goal touch in the 63rd minute.

Brazilian Paulo Sergio, whose proposed move to AS Roma was called off on

Friday, played a decisive role in his side's second goal when he passed to Dutchman Erik Meijer, who made no mistake four minutes from time.

Leverkusen's win sends them from fourth to second in what is a thrilling title race between Bayern, Leverkusen, Dortmund and Stuttgart.

The latter pair played Thursday in this split Easter round with Dortmund stealing a 1-0 victory at Sankt Pauli while Stuttgart lost ground after its 1-1 draw at home to 1860 Munich.

Montpellier beat Bordeaux 2-1 in the French cup quarter-finals on Saturday avenging their League Cup semifinal loss to them on penalties last month.

Montpellier, whose only previous domestic trophy was the 1990 French Cup, came from behind with goals from Frank Saez and Algerian international Kader Ferhaoui overhauling Didier Tholot's goal for Bordeaux.

They were joined in the semifinals by Laval, previously conquerors of league leaders Monaco, who won an all Second Division tie against Troyes 1-0 and first

division Guingamp who disposed of Third Division minnows Creteil after extra time.

Meanwhile Fourth Division Clermont Ferrand, who amazingly put out European Cup Winners Cup champions Paris Saint Germain in the previous round bowed out 2-1 to First Division strugglers Nice, but only after having forced extra-time.

Nice defender Olivier Fugère rose to head home in the second period of extra-time to end the valiant minnows hopes of cup glory.

Clermont-Ferrand, who had fought back from 4-1 down against Paris to win on penalties, had equalised Liberian striker James Debbah's opener for Nice, twice winners of the cup in 1952 and 1954, through Gilles Groux's powerful header from a corner fifteen minutes from the end of regular time.

Muster beats Bruguera for Lipton title

KEY BISCAINE (R) — A hard-nosed Thomas Muster showed a rare display of emotion Sunday after winning the Lipton Championships 7-6 (8-6) 6-3 6-1 over Sergi Bruguera of Spain.

After the one hour, 58 minute victory, the second-ranked Muster remembered back to eight years ago, when he was forced to withdraw from the Lipton finals against Ivan Lendl.

Back in 1989, after defeating Yannick Noah of France in a Friday night semifinal, Muster was hit by a drunk driver while bending over the trunk of a car.

The ligaments in his left knee were torn and it was questionable whether he would return to the game. A tenacious competitor, the Austrian was back on the courts less than six months later and worked his way to no. 1 in the world in February 1996.

"What happened eight years ago makes this a great day of justice for me," Muster said, his voice cracking.

Later Muster admitted this 44th career title, third on hardcourts, ranked with winning the 1995 French Open.

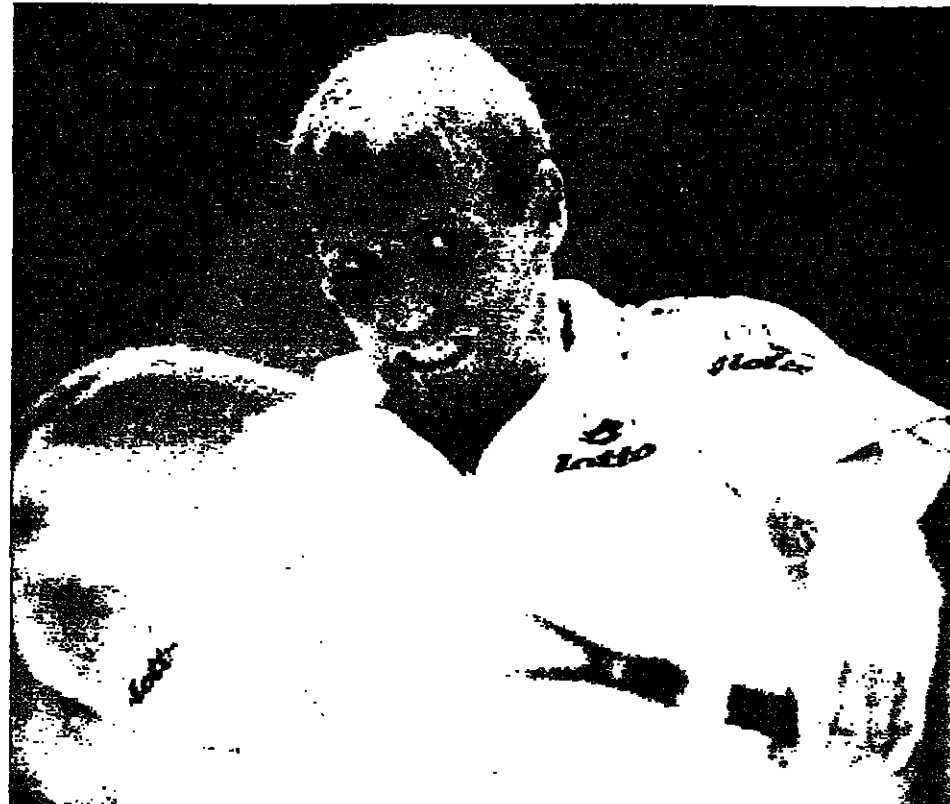
"I wasn't really crying," Muster said. "Maybe after the French Open, this is the most emotional moment in my career."

Muster says winning the Lipton was worth more than the \$2.5 million he received in a lawsuit he filed related to the accident. He said that after legal fees and U.S. taxes he ended up with about \$700,000 from the suit.

"It's not about the money. It's just that I had the chance to do it again, and what was taken away probably eight years ago, happened today."

Under a blazing sun and humid conditions which escalated on the court to 106 degrees Fahrenheit (41°C), the match was destined to be decided by who could stand the heat longer.

"I think it was about just taking the pain today, who can take it longer," said Muster, who earned \$360,000 for the win. "I think it was good tennis."



Thomas Muster of Austria returns a second set serve against Sergi Bruguera of Spain on March 30 in the men's finals match in Key Biscayne, Florida. Muster defeated Bruguera 7-6, (8-6) 6-3, 6-1 (Reuters photo)

But you just can't play for hours on a hardcourt with that heat. It's just impossible."

Bruguera, the 1993 and 1994 French Open champion, has won 14 career titles but has not won a title since 1994. In February 1995 he sprained his left knee, and in December 1995, he tore two ligaments in his right ankle.

Once ranked No. 3 in the world, the 35th-ranked Bruguera's ranking fell to no. 81 at the end of 1996, but will move back into the top 20 after the Lipton.

Bruguera, who won \$190,000 as runner-up, worked his way into the final with wins over top-ranked Pete Sampras in the semifinals and third-ranked Michael Chang in the third round.

Reaching his first final on American soil since he was supposed to play in the 1989 final here, Muster was ruthless after winning the first set. It was after that first set that the heat started to take its toll on Bruguera's feet.

"It was so much burning," Bruguera said of his feet. "I have two big blisters on both my feet."

ATP tour trainer Doug Spreen treated Bruguera on court with cooling ethyl chloride spray and wrapped his blistered feet with thin foam rubber.

"Sergi said to me, 'my feet are on fire,'" Spreen said. Bruguera told him after the first game of the second set.

It was a titanic first set which lasted 51 minutes and featured no service break opportunities.

Bruguera lost momentum in the first tiebreaker after failing to take advantage of two set points.

Muster set up his only set point in the tiebreaker on an incredibly exciting 13th point. During the point Muster was forced to lob

two consecutive balls in an attempt to stay in the point. That final lob landed on the ad court sideline and Bruguera, surprised that Muster got the ball back into play, netted a backhand off that lob.

"I saw it (the lob) on the line, but I thought it was going out," Bruguera said. "I was not ready to hit it. I thought it was going out, maybe because I wanted it to."

Muster, who is nearly impossible to stop once ahead, broke Bruguera's serve in the second game of the second set. In the third set Bruguera held serve once, in the fifth game at love.

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Iraq to launch flour distribution in April

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Sanctions-hit Iraqis will start receiving extra rations of flour in April following the arrival of ships delivering French and Australian wheat under the U.N. oil-for-food deal, Baghdad radio said Monday.

A ship began unloading 77,200 tonnes of French wheat after docking at Iraq's Gulf port of Umm Qasr on Monday, the first of 14 ships set to deliver wheat over the next few days, a Ministry of Trade source told the radio.

He said the Iraqi government "will start distributing wheat flour in April" under the supervision of the United Nations, which has deployed more than 100 observers in the country. No specific date was given.

He said Iraqis will see their monthly rations of wheat flour increased from seven to nine kilograms under the deal which took effect December 20 when Iraq resumed oil exports for the first time in six years.

U.N. officials have said distribution would not begin until enough of one commodity was available for Iraq's 22 million people, and did not give a date.

Thousands of tonnes of Thai rice, chick peas, cooking oil, white beans and salt have arrived either in Umm Qasr or by land from Turkey and Jordan since food started flowing in under the U.N. agreement on March 20.

The trade ministry source said the distribution of other items would begin in June. "Iraq wanted all these items distributed since March, but delays by the U.S. administration did not make it possible," he said.

U.N. officials said the first of nine ships carrying 250,000 tonnes of French and Australian wheat would begin arriving later Monday without being able to confirm the first had actually arrived.

More than 60 out of some 300 food and medicine contracts have been approved by the U.N. sanctions committee, U.N. officials said.

Another ship carrying Thai rice would arrive over the next 12 days, they said.

More than 2.2 million tonnes of wheat flour, rice, sugar, tea, cooking oil, infant milk powder, and salt are to be imported over six months under the deal, U.N. officials say.

Iraqis have welcomed the arrivals of food but said they also need more meat, fish and chicken.

The food as well as medical supplies, which have yet to begin arriving, are badly needed for Iraqis suffering from malnutrition and poor health since the sanctions were imposed after Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

Under the terms of the deal with the United Nations, Iraq can export \$2 billion of oil in

six months. The proceeds are earmarked for purchases of humanitarian goods, as well as to defray U.N. costs and compensate victims of the invasion.

Medicine as well as toilet soap, detergents, educational supplies and equipment for power plants and sewage treatment plants are also allowed under the deal allowed under U.N. resolution 986.

A full lifting of the oil and trade sanctions cannot take place until the United Nations is satisfied Iraq has come clean on its banned weapons programs.

The government says the sanctions and freeze on overseas assets deprive it of the revenue needed to feed its people and provide medical care.

Iraq has provided subsidised rations of basic food products since the 1991 Gulf war over Kuwait.

Meanwhile, U.N. chemical weapons experts left Baghdad on Monday after holding four days of talks with Iraqi officials amid fears Baghdad may be hiding tonnes of deadly nerve gas.

The nine-member team led by veteran Russian inspector Igor Mitrokhin took a special flight to the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) office in Bahrain where they will brief UNSCOM chairman Rolf Ekeus, U.N. officials said.

Mr. Ekeus, who says Iraq has failed to account for the destruction of 3,800 kilograms of VX nerve gas, will stop in Bahrain on his way to Baghdad on Thursday, travelling with four of the team members, an official said.

The official disclosed no details on the talks held by the chemical team, which was following up on a mission to Iraq by Mr. Ekeus in February.

Mr. Ekeus told reporters March 3 after giving a closed-door briefing to the U.N. Security Council that Iraq maintained it destroyed the entire quantity of VX nerve gas in secrecy following the 1991 Gulf war to free Kuwait.

But Iraq has not backed up the claim, and "it is a clear threat against the region" if such chemical agents were retained in the Iraqi arsenal, Mr. Ekeus said.

Under U.N. resolutions ending the Gulf war, Iraq must satisfy UNSCOM it has scrapped its programmes for weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles before the sanctions can be lifted.

During Mr. Ekeus' last mission, Iraq dropped its objections to the removal of scrapped missile engines for analysis overseas to determine if Iraq has also retained long-range missiles.

Israel wrecks Abu Diya's home

SURIF (Agencies) — Israel on Monday demolished the West Bank home of a Palestinian suicide bomber who killed three Israeli women in a Tel Aviv cafe 10 days ago, witnesses said.

They said the Israeli army imposed a curfew on the village of Surif near Jerusalem as a bulldozer wrecked the second floor of the house in which the 28-year-old bomber Mousa Abu Diya, his wife and four children lived.

Israel's high court rejected an appeal on Sunday by the family against the destruction, which Palestinians and human rights groups view as collective punishment. Judges ruled the measure is a legitimate form of deterrence.

The suicide bombing followed Israel's ground-breaking for a Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem, which outraged Palestinians and plunged the peace process into crisis.

Israeli soldiers have clashed daily with Palestinian stone throwers in the West Bank since construction at Jabal Abu Ghneim, called Har Homa by Israel, began on March 18.

The Abu Diya family had appealed to the supreme court against the military decision to destroy their



A Palestinian woman, who lived in the Palestinian suicide bomber's house, cries in the street on Monday after Israeli army bulldozers destroyed the second floor of her home in the West Bank village of Surif (AFP photo)

home, a punishment which has been in use here since the British mandate.

Two of the three supreme court judges said destroying part of the house where Abu Diya lived would be enough and that the suicide bomber's parents should not be punished. They then recommended that only the second story, where the bomber lived, be demolished.

One of the judges said that he considered blowing up the homes of suicide attackers "unworthy of a society which claims to uphold democratic values."

The family's Israeli lawyer, Allegra Pasheco, told the court that "13 innocent people will be left homeless."

The lawyer said blowing up Palestinian homes was "discriminatory" because Israel does not demolish the homes of Israelis who kill

Palestinians.

In the past, the supreme court has rejected similar appeals by families of perpetrators of suicide attacks, against the destruction of their homes.

Such collective punishment, which is regularly used by Israel, is prohibited under the 1949 Geneva Convention, which protects people living under military occupation.

Yemeni gunman sentenced to death

SANAA (AFP) — A Yemeni bus driver who shot dead five people during a rampage at two private schools here Sunday was sentenced to death by a court on Monday.

Mohammad Al Nadhiri, 42, confessed as his hastily arranged trial got underway to opening fire with a Kalashnikov assault rifle on teachers and students at the two schools in the Yemeni capital.

Nadhiri, a veteran of the war against Soviet troops in Afghanistan, told the court he went on the shooting spree to avenge the rape of his eight-year-old daughter by a school official.

Nadhiri, who was employed as a bus driver at Al Taleah school, where the rampage began, said he staged the attack to avenge the rape of his daughter by an administrator at the school last year.

According to neighbours, Nadhiri, a Muslim extremist, was also critical of the mixing of boys and girls in schools.

The defendant, sporting the long beard favoured by strict Islamists, was brought into court by two policemen. Nadhiri was wounded by police during a shootout which led to his arrest.

Nadhiri opened fire with a Kalashnikov assault rifle on students at the Taleah school as they prepared to file into class on Sunday.

He then moved on to the nearby Mussa Ben Nusair School, shooting passersby on the way, and opened fire at random.

Yemeni authorities said the shooting spree left five people dead including Asma Noman, the Egyptian headmistress of the Taleah school, Mohammad Yahia Al Alafi, a teacher at the Mussa Ben Nusair School, Imad Saleh Al Araf, 12, a student, a pedestrian and a grocer.

Eleven people were injured — eight students between the ages of 12 and 19 and three passersby.

Witnesses said Sunday that three other students had died but there has been no official confirmation of the claim. A teachers' union described Nadhiri Monday as a "crazed killer" and urged the authorities to "apply the severest possible penalties" against him.

The court rejected his argument that his daughter was raped after a doctor examined the girl.

"The emergency court has condemned the defendant Mohammad Al Nadhiri to death by firing squad," said Judge Haykal Ahmad Osman.

His verdict was met with cheers in the packed courtroom and by hundreds of people waiting outside.

"Long live justice," they shouted.

Relatives called for the sentence to be carried out immediately. "Our children will not be buried until he is dead," said one.

Nadhiri, dressed in a grey Yemeni robe, was impassive at the reading of the verdict. One of his arms was bandaged where he was shot by police during his arrest on Sunday but he did not appear to be in any pain.

Legal experts said Nadhiri may appeal the verdict to two higher courts and eventually ask President Ali Abdullah Saleh to commute the death sentence.

The court also decided to seize some of the gunman's assets to compensate the 11 people injured during his rampage.

His five children — two girls and three boys aged between five years old and 13 years old — were in court for part of the trial at the request of their father.

U.S. should treat Iraq, Israel on same terms, Kuwaiti daily demands

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — The United States should place the same strict standards on Israel to stop it from destroying the peace process that it puts on Iraq to abide by U.N. resolutions, a Kuwaiti daily said Monday.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright "does not find any embarrassment in practicing political double standards with the Arab World," the daily Al Rai Al Aam said in a front page editorial.

"She is resolute in whatever is related to the regime of (Iraqi President) Saddam Hussein and the future of Iraq and decisive in her calls for its compliance with United Nations resolutions," the paper said.

"But Albright, a woman of principles, presents a different picture when the issue relates to Israel," it said.

It is no surprise when the United States shows its traditional sympathies towards Israel, but it is "no cause for pride" when the U.S. supports Israeli Premier Benjamin Netanyahu who is "attempting to destroy the peace process."

"We can applaud Albright and the American administration when she insists on deterring the Baghdad tyrant," the paper said.

"But we can only feel disappointment and rejection when the American administration turns to the positions of (Netanyahu's party) Likud and demands that the Palestinians resist terrorism instead of demanding an end to settlements to prevent inciting terrorism," the editorial said.

The U.S. should not only call for Iraq to abide by U.N. resolutions, but must also "tame Netanyahu and his clique," it added.

Kuwait has been dependent on the United States for its security since the 1990-1991 Iraqi invasion and occupation, and backs all U.N. resolutions imposed on Iraq.

Qadhafi urges jihad to liberate Jerusalem

Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi says the policies of Mr. Netanyahu give the Arabs no alternative but to go to war to liberate their land from the Jewish state.

"The time has come for the holy battle for the liberation of Jerusalem," Libya's official JANA news agency on Monday quoted Colonel Qadhafi as saying.

He added that Mr. Netanyahu's refusal to negotiate an end to the Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights means "there is no choice for Syria now except war to liberate the Golan."

Col. Qadhafi made the remarks in a speech Sunday marking the anniversary of the March 1970 pullout of British troops from Libya. The British were ordered out after the September 1969 coup that overthrew King Idris and brought Col. Qadhafi to power.

The comments from Col. Qadhafi were his strongest since the debate over Israel's construction of a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

The Libyan leader pointed out that Mr. Netanyahu was going ahead with the project despite widespread condemnation from around the globe.

"Here he is destroying Arab East Jerusalem to build a new settlement in defiance of all," JANA quoted Col. Qadhafi as saying.

Turkish council defers pro-secular directives

ANKARA (AP) — The military-dominated National Security Council on Monday held back from confrontation with Premier Necmettin Erbakan, who has angered the secular establishment with moves to Islamise Turkey.

The council last month demanded that Mr. Erbakan retract such measures.

After a four-hour meeting Monday, the council gave him another month to meet its demands, television reports said.

The council last month had asked for reducing religious school curriculums from six years to

three, restrictions on radical publications and broadcasts, a strict ban on Islamic-style clothing and head coverings at state offices and universities and curbs on sale of shotguns.

Mr. Erbakan has blown hot and cold on obeying, most recently showing a defiant attitude.

"Religiously faithful people... founded this republic," he said last week. "They have no obligations to make compromises to anyone."

The council's members include five top generals and is led by President Suleyman Demirel. Mr. Erbakan was present at the

meeting.

A council statement said it discussed economic development of the Kurdish-dominated eastern and southeastern regions, as well as security issues.

Mr. Erbakan's resistance to the directives has angered members of his center-right coalition partner, the True Path Party.

Several True Path ministers called on their leader, Tansu Ciller, who serves as deputy prime minister and foreign minister, to withdraw from the coalition.

"A new broad based government (excluding Welfare) has to be formed without wasting any more

time," said Industry Minister Yalim Erez, a leading True Path deputy, in an interview with the daily Hurriyet Monday.

Mr. Erbakan is the first Islamic prime minister of this NATO-member country, which is seeking to join the European Union.

Among Mr. Erbakan's Islamisation moves have been the rearranging of working hours to fit fasting times during the month of Ramadan, a proposal to allow female civil servants to wear Islamic head coverings and plans to build a mosque in Istanbul's main square.

Iran denies sheltering Khobar blast suspect

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — An Iranian official has denied U.S. reports that the mastermind behind a bombing which killed 19 airmen in Saudi Arabia is under the protection of Iran, a Kuwaiti newspaper reported Monday.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Mohammad Mohammadi told Al Rai Al Aam the mastermind of the Khobar bombing was not a guest in Iran and said the U.S. claims reflected its annoyance at Iran's improving ties with Gulf Arab states.

"It is clear day after day that the American administration is very annoyed by the noticeable improvement which it sees in Iranian relations with the Arab World and the Gulf states, especially with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," Mr. Mohammadi told the Kuwaiti daily.

"So it is launching a campaign of disinformation against the Islamic Republic to distort the facts and publish lies," he said.

Iran has moved to improve relations with Saudi Arabia, which it has accused of subscribing to an "American brand of Islam," and other Arab states across the Gulf.

Earlier this month, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati toured the region to invite Gulf Arab leaders to attend the Organisation of the Islamic Conference summit to be held in Tehran in December.

The New York daily Newsday, citing U.S. government sources, said Saturday that the alleged Khobar mastermind, Ahmad Ibrahim Ahmad Mughassil, was in Iran, lending support to the theory that Iran played a major role in the attack.

The truck-bomb attack killed 19 U.S. service per-

sonnel billeted in the Khobar Towers complex in eastern Saudi Arabia. More than 300 U.S. and Saudi citizens were injured in the June 1996 blast.

Newsday quoted a U.S. counter-terrorism expert as saying Mughassil fled to Syria after the attack and crossed into Iran, where he "lives under the protection of, as a guest of, the Iranian government."

Yasser Al Sirri, spokesman for the London-based Islamic Observation Centre, told the Associated Press on Monday that Sayegh wants any legal proceedings held in Canada.

"Hani told me, I will not get a fair trial in Saudi Arabia or the United States," Mr. Sirri said Sayegh told him in a telephone conversation late last week.

He quoted Sayegh as saying: "What I want is an open trial in Canada. I do not trust America, because they want to hurt Muslims."

Sayegh said America's anti-Muslim stance was evident in its two recent vetoes of U.N. Security Council resolutions critical of Israel.

Sayegh, who is 28, is to appear at an April 28 court hearing in Canada to determine whether he will be deported to face charges in the truck bombing.

He has denied involvement in the attack.

He has requested refugee status in Canada, claiming he was persecuted in his homeland for religious reasons. He is a Shi'ite Muslim, while the majority of Saudis are from the mainstream Sunni sect of Islam.

The Islamic Observation Centre is a human rights group founded in 1995 to advance the rights of Muslims worldwide. It sends delegates to visit Muslim prisoners and pro-

vides help in hiring lawyers and supporting suspects' families.

Mr. Sirri also said that Sayegh, in a phone conversation last Thursday, repeated earlier denials that he was a member of the Saudi Hizbollah or had connections to the Iranian government.

Sayegh told him, however, he lived in the Iranian holy city of Qom from 1987-1991 while studying religion.

He says he moved to Syria three years later with his wife and two children.

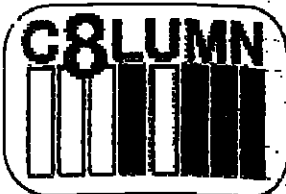
He had planned to take his family along to Canada last year and said they had gone to Saudi Arabia to say farewell to relatives. But Mr. Sirri quoted him as saying that Saudi authorities blocked his wife, Hakima Al Qatri, 25, from leaving the country last August so he went to Canada alone.

Sayegh was arrested in Ottawa on March 18. Canadian officials claim Sayegh is a threat to Canadian security and want to deport him.

A Canadian Security Intelligence Service report, parts of which were made public Thursday, said Sayegh is a member of Saudi Hizbollah, a militant group with alleged links to the pro-Iranian Hizbollah in Lebanon.

The report says he was involved in surveillance of the Dhahran military complex and drove a car that gave the go-ahead to the bomb-filled truck to move into place.

On Sunday, a Saudi Interior Ministry official said the kingdom wants Sayegh sent home for trial. U.S. officials have said that since he entered Canada from the United States, Sayegh could be deported to U.S. territory.



Briton has transatlantic jumbo to himself

LONDON (R) — A British stockbroker returning to London on Sunday from an Easter shopping trip to New York found himself bumped up to first class with 17 flight attendants at his beck and call because he was the only passenger on board. The British Airways 747 plane was delayed by an electrical fault and all the passengers except Stuart Pike switched to another flight. "I wasn't in any hurry and didn't mind hanging around so I thought I'd wait. I thought there would be more space on this flight...but I didn't realise just how much," Pike said.

Siberian tiger found in Canada

BARRIE, Ontario — A fugitive Siberian tiger was discovered hiding in woods near a small Canadian city after roaming free for about 11 hours, forcing residents to stay in their homes. Police had told people in the Barrie area to remain in their homes until they could find the 270-kilogramme tiger, which escaped from its compound by scaling a 2.7-metre fence. The four-year-old male, named Zarac, was found in a wooded area behind the Bear Creek wildlife sanctuary from which he had escaped after being brought there with his mother the previous day, said Sergeant Steve Crowe of the Ontario provincial police. "Apparently, the mother tiger has been calling for him," Crowe said. "The idea is that they'll leave him alone and he will go back to mom and be captured humanely." Police plan to use chickens to lure Zarac back to his cage. Barrie is about 90 kilometres north of Toronto.

Spice Girls and soap open new British TV channel

LONDON (R) — The first new British terrestrial television channel in 15 years opened with a theme tune sung by the all-female pop group Spice Girls and a soap opera that attracted complaints even before it was broadcast. Channel 5 is hoping to hook viewers by showing a half-hour soap, family affairs, at 6.30 each evening. But Conservative lawmaker Nicholas Winterton complained in advance after hearing of one scene in the opening episode in which a tattoo is exposed on a man's buttock. "It is unacceptable to have nude scenes on at a time when children are watching," Winterton said.

Russian shot dead in row over parking space

MOSCOW (R) — A Russian dentist killed another driver after a row over a parking space, Moscow police said. A spokesman said the middle-aged dentist shot the other driver dead after a heated argument over who was to park his car at the lot in southern Moscow. A few hours later the dentist handed himself over to police. Gangland shootouts have become common in Moscow, the victims usually being involved in banking or business.